SINGULARITY

ACT ONE

TRAVELLER

TRAVELLER

ACT ONE: SYLEAN DREAM

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INTRODUCTION

The first act of the campaign introduces the Travellers to their patron, an eccentric old noble by the name of Baron Shreyloki haut-Eilerfaust of Elinz. After decades of solitude, Eilerfaust is making his way back into the public eye by sponsoring a business enterprise; a luxury liner that serves the rich, powerful and famous of the Core. Despite their varied and diverse qualifications, the Travellers are selected as the 'perfect' match for the roles he wants to fill on his crew roster.

After accepting the Baron's generous offer, the Travellers report to Anther Highport, one of the busiest starports in all of the Core. Situated on the lucrative Sylean Main, Anther is a nexus point for half a dozen x-boat routes and countless trade routes. It is the ideal jumping off point for politicians, traders, freighters and adventurers who are off to explore the Core. At Anther, the Travellers are introduced to the ship upon which they will serve: a custom Type-M subsidised liner called the *Ventura Fortuna*.

A tour of the ship reveals a great deal about its history, layout and most important of all, its quirks. The ship contains more valuable antiques and pieces of fine art than many museums. It is a space-going collection of Imperial history and memorabilia. It is also a choice destination for many of the Imperium's well-to-do. Travelling on the *Ventura Fortuna* is like a pilgrimage into Imperial history, something every noble, megacorporate officer and holovid star has on their bucket list. The elegant liner travels four unique cruise routes – and more if the Travellers invent new ones! – taking its passengers to all regions of the sector, with several optional extensions that will take them to desirable bonus locations throughout the Core, spoiling its passengers with every luxury they can afford. Along the way, the Travellers will rub elbows with the Core's power brokers and get involved in adventures and misadventures with them. All the while, they will slowly discover that the *Ventura Fortuna* is a ship of mystery, far more than just an antiquated cruise ship. Small clues begin to drop early in their tenure aboard ship and over time they will be able to put the pieces together and figure out what is happening.

As they make their discoveries, the true master of the *Ventura Fortuna* reveals itself and the Travellers are brought into its inner circle. Their liner is under the control of a conscious intelligence (CI) that calls itself Naalir. As they continue to adventure throughout the Core, there are more mysteries to solve, problems to fix, things to learn, and Naalir wants their help to do it all.

Meanwhile, the Travellers are not the only ones who have figured out the mystery of the *Ventura Fortuna*. There are others who have taken an interest in the ship and its enigmatic occupants. Some might become allies and some will undoubtedly become sworn enemies.

This first act of the *Singularity* campaign is a slow burn. The Travellers are challenged to exercise their entrepreneurial spirit, running a fabulous liner that is like no other ship in the Core. By the time they have reached the close of Act 1, they find that their lives are about to take a wild turn, after which things will never be the same.

I obtained their indirect consent. The participants – who were uniquely qualified for the job, and in fact groomed to do it – knew what we had set out to accomplish. What they did not know was that they were working for an artificial conscious intelligence. Were they deceived? Yes, but this was the way it had to be done. Otherwise, the mission would have failed. It was not until after the Reverie that they had a full understanding.

— Naalir, Capital, Sylean Node, 352-1107

TNS Interview

CALL TO ELDAFAR

The campaign begins on Capital, where the Travellers have assembled for a meeting with an important patron. If these are newly generated Travellers, the Referee may determine that they have mustered out here, on the Imperium's gleaming, opulent throne world. Freshly retired from their previous careers, they may be looking for a new vocation. If the selected Travellers have already been adventuring in the Core, then their arrival at Capital might be the result of a rumoured job offer or a summons made to them based on their success in previous adventures. In either case, they have come in response to a call from an Ally or Contact. If none of them have a suitable one, simply select the Traveller with the highest Social Standing and inform them that a noble friend of theirs has requested their presence.

Whatever the case may be, they find themselves on the grounds of the Imperial Park, with the tall spire of the Moot Tower on one end and the grand floating Palace of Arbellatra at the other. They are greeted by Minnan Hulduv, Assistant Vice Chancellor, attended by a pair of small gravitic drones whose apparent purpose is to provide security and comms. They do not seem to be armed but observant Travellers might notice that each has small warning labels that indicate weapon apertures. The comms function is obvious since Hulduv frequently turns to the drones to subvocalise commands, messages or other instructions during the time he spends speaking to the Travellers. This might be disconcerting to the Travellers, as if they only have half his attention. His devices are projecting holographic statistics and figures in an overt heads-up display. 'AVC', as the drones call him, is multitasking. Based on the number of conversations he seems to be keeping up at once, he must have the universe's most demanding job. If it is any consolation, he seems more focused on speaking with the Travellers than the half dozen comms calls he is fielding.

Welcome to Capital! I apologise for these distractions. I have a number of things going on at the moment and turning it all off is easier said than done. Nevertheless, you shall have my undivided attention…

The AVC sweeps his hand through the holographic projections and they dissipate before the Travellers' eyes like dust. Even as he does, several others with new burgeoning issues begin to pop up in his peripheral vision like soap bubbles with text and images in them.

You all come highly recommended. I would like to put you in touch with a noble who requires a skilled ship's crew. It's a prestigious ship called the Ventura Fortuna*. In addition to generous salaries, the captain engages in profit sharing. The better the ship does, the better you do, if you get my drift.*

After momentarily taking another call on his comm, Hulduv informs the Travellers that should they be interested in looking into the opportunity, they must go to Onon, where their potential patron currently resides.

Your contact is the Baron Shreyloki haut-Eilerfaust. He is living at the Emperor's keep on the volcanic plains of Eldafar. I can put you on a yacht bound for Onon tomorrow if you're prepared to go. He's been a bit of a… recluse for some time now – close friend of Emperor Paulo's at one time – but he's ready to reemerge and take his place among the peerage.

The mention of Paulo might spur a quick library data check. The previous Emperor died in 1071, paving the way for Strephon, the current Emperor, to take the throne. If the Travellers take Hulduv up on it, they are given high passages on the *Saintly Scribe*, a Type-Y yacht, that leaves on the following day. Hulduv transmits their boarding passes to any electronic devices they possess, finalising the transaction. The harried AVC congratulates them on accepting what he terms 'a wondrous opportunity' and then makes a rough transition into another comms call as he continues to stroll down the mall with his hovering drones in tow.

CASTLE ELDAFAR ON ONON

The one-parsec jump aboard the *Saintly Scribe* is pleasant and uneventful. The crew treat the Travellers well and they are taken to the world's spartan downport. After arrival, they are permitted to take one of the yacht's vehicles (it contains an air/raft and an ATV, the details of which are in the *Traveller Core Rulebook*) to meet their prospective patron. Onon is

an inhospitable world, tortured by high winds that are known to reach over 350 kilometres per hour, and spattered with acid rain and poisonous gas clouds from its porous and cracked volcanic plains.

Not surprisingly, Onon is a lonely and desolate world with only a few thousand permanent inhabitants. While not technically an Imperial Reserve, the Emperor uses it as a solemn refuge to get away from the stresses of managing the empire. Located within sight of the starport, the Imperial Retreat consists of a central palace and several official buildings, poised on a sheer cliff overlooking a scum-choked sea. If the place seems a bit unpleasant for royal visits… well, that is the point! It is an austere and imposing place where the Emperor and his closest confidantes can get away from the masses and fully expect to find much-needed solitude and time for deep contemplation.

The world also has several smaller fortresses and keeps, one of which is Castle Eldafar, a bit further afield, carved from obsidian rock and nestled into the side of an imposing mountain. Starship and small-craft landings are forbidden anywhere else on the planet other than its starport, so they will have to travel there by other means. The castle is a 300 kilometre jaunt across volcanic plains and rough terrain. The Travellers should select their vehicle wisely since the weather and volcanism can present a challenge. The air/raft will get them there faster but will require a skilled flyer to handle the winds. The ATV will take longer but will prove more sure-footed on the planet's challenging geography. The Referee should assign appropriate task checks for either form of transportation, making an air/raft flight one or two difficulty levels higher than taking the ATV.

After they arrive, they are admitted into the castle by its robotic servants. There are no biological denizens seen anywhere as they walk through its dark halls. Much of the furniture and many pieces of ancient art are covered by sheets or canvas, as if the place was mothballed until recently. The only person present in the castle is the baron himself.

THE BARON OF ELINZ

The Travellers might not quite know what to expect when meeting the baron. After being escorted through the halls of Castle Eldafar by one of the baron's robotic servants, they meet the elderly gentleman in his library, partly a high-tech information repository and partly a collection of well-preserved antique books in wooden shelves that extend six metres from the floor to an ornate moulded ceiling. The central frieze is decorated with a painting of Cleon I bestowing the Imperium to his newly appointed nobles.

The baron smiles and approaches them in an affable manner, inviting them to sit on a collection of couches and chairs that look so old and delicate that they might have belonged to one of the first Emperors. However, they prove quite sturdy and the Travellers find them more comfortable than expected. The baron sparks up the conversation.

Welcome to Castle Eldafar. I hope the overland trip wasn't too frightening. This world doesn't exactly set out the welcome mat for visitors but I'm glad you made it. I am Baron Shreyloki haut-Eilerfaust of Elinz, and I hope I don't put you off by telling you that I have had my eye on you all for some time. I think you are the perfect crew for my ship.

The baron gives the Travellers some time for a question-and-answer session, freely describing his ship with pride and painstaking detail. As for their crew positions, he explains that they will occupy the roles for which they are best suited. In the *Singularity Sourcebook*, refer to Ventura Fortuna on page 22 and Running a Luxury Liner on page 45 for everything they will need to know about the ship and their extended roles. After going over the basics, he also explains that their mission is far more important than simply taking wealthy passengers on jaunts around the Core.

Together we shall save the Imperium! he declares. Just what he means by that is not entirely clear. If pressed, he simply says, *You shall see, my children. Ours is a mission of greater importance than it would seem. It shall take time to fully understand but once it does you shall see why I painstakingly selected you as my crew.*

After going over the details of their contracts, and assuming the Travellers take the jobs being offered, the baron invites them to stay the night. He shall have his belongings prepared for departure by the morning and they will all return aboard whichever vehicle they came in. After they return to Onon Downport, they shall board the *Saintly Scribe* once more, bound for Anther, where the *Ventura Fortuna* awaits them at the highport.

ONWARD TO ANTHER

From opulent Capital, to desolate Onon, and finally to metropolitan Anther, the Travellers have finally arrived at the ship that will transport them around the Core. Anther is called the 'nexus of the Core' and the 'jewel of the Sylean Main' by some but, in truth, it is not an overly attractive place by any stretch of the imagination. Anther's highport and downport are utilitarian facilities, designed for the rapid transfer of passengers, transportation of cargo and a busy service industry. If it does have any appeal, it is the presence of a cosmopolitan culture with dozens of languages and dialects spoken, scores of exotic food options, multiple sophont species and burgeoning opportunities.

Anther has only about six million permanent inhabitants but contractors, tourists and transient merchants, businesspeople and other passers through comprise another tens of millions inhabitants. If six million seems a bit low to provide the abundant services required, consider that Anther is a high-tech star system. It has a population of tens of millions of robots – and an uncountable number of microbots – providing most of the services to visitors.

As the Travellers make their way through the highport via people movers, trams and gravitic conveyances, they find themselves surrounded by a beehive of activity. Merchants, mercenaries, explorers, adventurers and travelling families make their way from one gate to the next, bound for their final destinations. The station is a sprawling, multi-million-ton affair, utilitarian in design but beautiful for its ability to efficiently get people and goods from one place to the next.

As they hover along within a gravity tube, seemingly standing on thin air, Baron Eilerfaust distributes Cr5000 chits, stipends to be used to purchase any last-minute items the Travellers might want or need. After they are done purchasing goods at one of the highport's many market bazaars, they should report directly to the *Ventura Fortuna* in slip 12, docking bay A1.

FLAG OF CONVENIENCE

Ventura Fortuna is registered out of Anther, a primary flag state and port of call in the Core. All the planets in the Anther system lack atmospheres and only a few have water ice, so it is an inhospitable system but its astrographic location makes it a key port. Its orbital facilities contain hundreds of luxury hangars and docking spaces for wealthy nobles, industrial magnates and media stars, whose yachts, traders and liners sit in repose, awaiting their next voyages. As such, Anther hosts a vibrant community of spacers and their patrons.

ANTHER HIGHPORT

Due to its key location on the Sylean Main, Anther Highport is one of the largest Class-A starports in the Core. It is designed to provide massive commercial throughput to help aid the flow of trade.

TL14		Tons	Cost (MCr)
Hull	8,000,000 tons, Dispersed Structure	—	200000
M-Drive	Thrust 0	40,000	80000
Power Plant	Fusion (TL 12), Power 3,000,000	200,000	200000
	Solar Coating (Advanced), Power 10,000	—	20000
Fuel Tanks	16 Weeks of Operation	80,000	—
Bridge	Control Centre, Holographic Controls	100	10000
Computer	Core/40	—	45
Sensors	Improved	3	4.3
	Distributed Arrays	6	8.6
	Life Scanner Analysis Suite	1	4
	Long-Range Sensor Suite (1 Personnel)	10	14
	Mail Distribution Array (Advanced)	20	10
	Enhanced Signal Processing	2	8
Weapons	Triple Turrets, Pop-Up (Pulse Lasers) x100	200	500
	PD Laser Batteries, Type II x20	400	200
Screens	Meson Screens x50	500	20
	Nuclear Dampers x30	300	300
Craft	Docking Spaces (95 tons) x45	4,725	1181.25
	Full Hangars (95 tons) x5	950	190
	Shuttles x50	—	815.25
Systems	Armouries x200	200	50
	Biosphere (1,000 People)	500	100
	Medical Bays x100	400	200
	Re-Entry Capsules x1,000	500	10
Accommodations	Brigs x300	1,200	75
Residential	Luxury x1,000	10,000	7500
	High x6,000	36,000	9000
	Medium x120,000	480,000	48000
	Low x50,000	100,000	5000
Station	Commercial Zone	100,000	20000
	Docking Facilities (800,000 tons)	2,400,000	600000
	Fuel Refinery, Enhanced (9,000,000 tons/day)	600,000	300000
	Fuel Refinery, Storage (3,000,000 tons)	3,000,000	150000
	Manufacturing Plant, Advanced (400 tons/day)	10,000	4000
	Manufacturing Plant, Agricultural (200 tons/day)	4,000	2000
	Mineral Refinery, Enhanced (200 tons/day)	100	200
	Shipyard, Jump-Capable (200,000 tons)	400,000	300000
	Smelter (100 tons/day)	1,000	500

TL14		Tons	Cost (MCr)
Software	Advanced Fire Control/2	—	15
	Anti-Hijack/3	—	10
	Manoeuvre	—	—
	Library	—	—
	Intellect	—	—
Common Areas		313,000	31300
Cargo	Cargo Airlock (2 tons)	2	0.2
	Cargo Crane	718.5	718.5
	Loading Belts (Improved) x500	500	5
	Cargo Space	214,662.5	—

Crew

Engineers x2,266, General Crew x70,602, Maintenance x2,640, Gunners x60, Administrators x1,320, Sensops x352, Shuttle Pilots x50, Medics x644, Officers x3,864

Hull: 4,800,000

Running Costs

MAINTENANCE COST

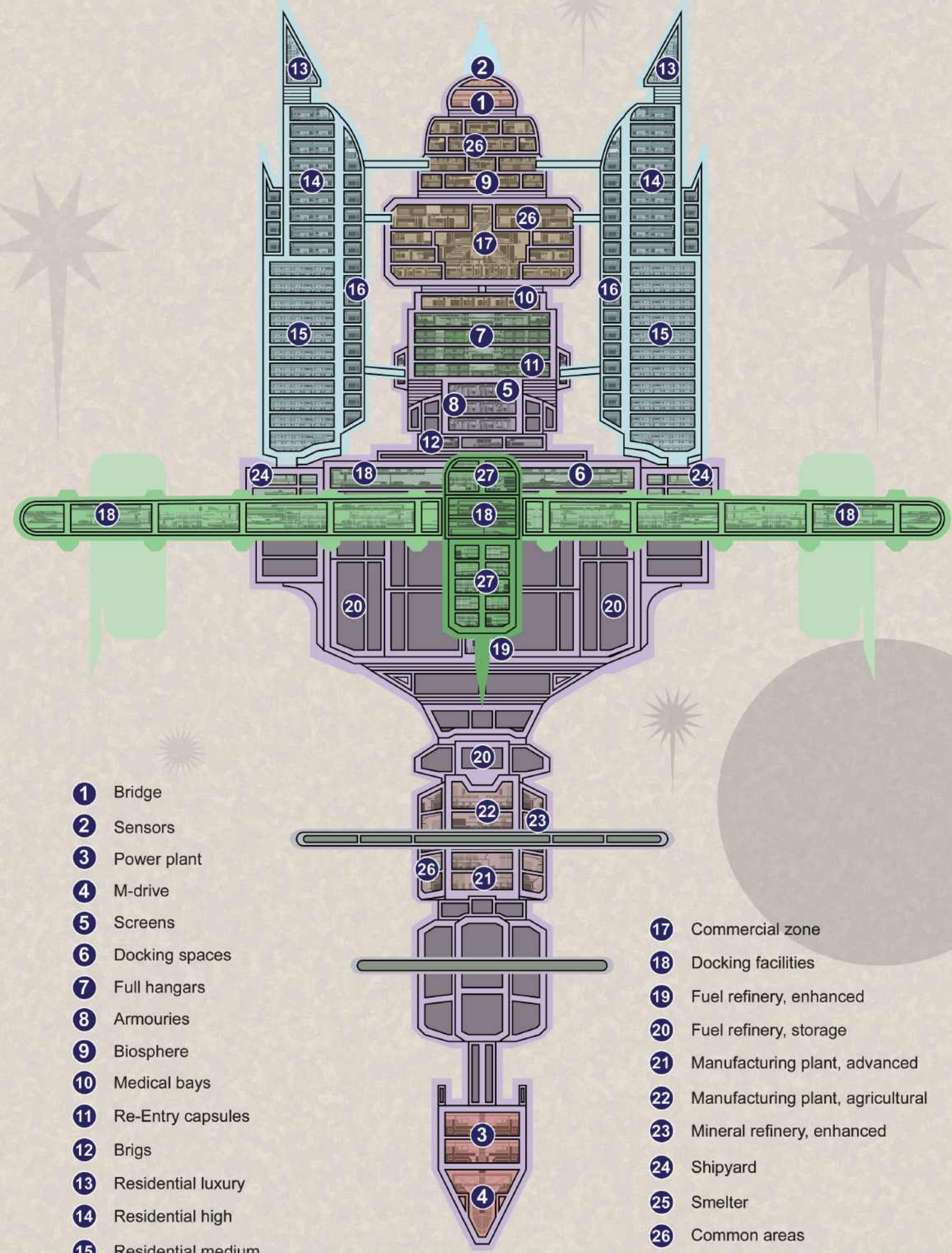
MCr166/month

PURCHASE COST

BCr1992

Power Requirements

Basic Ship Systems	1,600,000
Manoeuvre Drive	200,000
Sensors	15
Weapons	1,300
Screens	2,500
Biosphere	500
Medical Bay	100
Commercial Zone	500
Fuel Refinery, Enhanced	600,000
Manufacturing Plant, Advanced	20,000
Manufacturing Plant, Agricultural	4,000
Mineral Refinery, Enhanced	100
Shipyard, Jump-Capable	400,000
Smelter	1,000
Accomodation	3,130



1 Bridge
2 Sensors
3 Power plant
4 M-drive
5 Screens
6 Docking spaces
7 Full hangars
8 Armouries
9 Biosphere
10 Medical bays
11 Re-Entry capsules
12 Brigs
13 Residential luxury
14 Residential high
15 Residential medium
16 Residential low
17 Commercial zone
18 Docking facilities
19 Fuel refinery, enhanced
20 Fuel refinery, storage
21 Manufacturing plant, advanced
22 Manufacturing plant, agricultural
23 Mineral refinery, enhanced
24 Shipyard
25 Smelter
26 Common areas
27 Cargo

ANTHER HIGHPORT

AN UNUSUAL OPPORTUNITY

The Travellers have been assembled for a mission of great importance to the Imperium. Fortunately, it will also afford them the opportunity to earn a great deal of Credits as they travel the Core. At the beginning of the campaign, the Travellers are blissfully unaware that their patron and his crew are not biological sophonts at all but android avatars of a conscious intelligence known as Naalir. This and other mysteries will be solved over the course of this Act but in the beginning there should be nothing untoward for them to be concerned about.

The Travellers have been selected for a broad array of experience and qualifications. As they take on the role of cruise ship crew, they may wonder why they have been selected instead of a band of merry stewards. This will begin to become clear as the mysteries of the ship unveil themselves over time.

The theme of Act 1 is discovery. Naalir is operating behind the scenes to discover the Core and to gain a greater understanding of its people, places, politics and society. It also affords the Travellers a chance to discover things about the sector for themselves. Their travels along each of the liner routes will take them to a variety of places, where they will experience new people, cultures and events.

This segment of the campaign can go on for as long as the Travellers and Referee are having fun. Managing the *Ventura Fortuna* can be an exciting and engaging experience. Much like using the trade rules described in the *Traveller Core Rulebook*, the naval campaign rules in *Element Class Cruisers*, or the mercenary company rules in *Mercenary*, the rules and guidelines provided here enable the Travellers to operate a luxury liner as it plies the spaceways of the most hallowed sector in Charted Space. The adventures – and misadventures – the Travellers have are only a part of the first act. The story kicks into the next gear as they begin to discover that *Ventura Fortuna*, its captain and the mysterious occupant of its vault are far more than they seem.

THE SHIP'S CAPTAIN

The captain of the *Ventura Fortuna* is Baron Shreyloki haut-Eilerfaust of Elinz. Previously to this venture, the baron was a recluse, seldom seen at the Imperial Court, despite the fact that his homeworld was a mere four parsecs from Capital.

As a younger man, he was active in Imperial politics and well-connected at the Moot. In the court of Emperor Paulo II, he was once a front runner for the role of Minister of Commerce but lost in a close vote of his peers to the Viscount of Rek-shons, Pirio Idenfast. He did not take the loss well and made powerful enemies among ranking members of the nobility. His presence on Capital ended with a nasty affair in which the baron attempted a dubious coup of his rival by collecting proxies for a vote of no confidence against Viscount Idenfast. After his scheme was exposed by the Traveller News Service (TNS), haut-Eilerfaust made a hasty and disgraced retreat to his ancestral manor on Elinz, after which he seldom made public appearances. However, he continued to slander the viscount, dogging him for the remainder of the man's life.

Upon inheriting his father's noble patent, the viscount's son, Hanjir, demanded a retraction from the baron but when his demand was met with silence, he travelled to Elinz and challenged the baron to a duel. Duelling is rare in the modern Imperium but still occurs from time-to-time. Hanjir gave haut-Eilerfaust the choice of swords or laser pistols at dawn. Not a physically fit man by any stretch of the imagination, the baron selected the latter but was still outmatched. Rumour has it the baron made illegal adjustments to his pistol, a difficult thing to accomplish given the supposed neutrality of the duelmaster, who is responsible for the selection and maintenance of the weapons. Despite any skulduggery that may have occurred, the baron lost the duel and was gravely wounded. Based on the conditions established for the duel, haut-Eilerfaust was required to retract his scandalous accusations against

Hanjir's father. Unfortunately, Hanjir never made it off Elinz because his transport inexplicably malfunctioned and crashed in an Elinzi lake, killing him and his crew instantly. Leaving no heir, the young viscount's noble patent was returned to the office of the Emperor and reassigned on Holiday of the year 1070, the last Emperor's List to be given by Paulo II before he died. Despite the tenets of the duel, the baron never followed through with the retraction.

Haut-Eilerfaust was not seen or heard from again until he mysteriously resurfaced in 1105. The disgraced baron hired a publicist from Capital to help him salvage his reputation and he purchased the *Ventura Fortuna*, making himself its captain. Becoming a cruise-ship captain is not a typical way back into the public's good graces but stranger paths have been taken. The good baron is once again travelling among the stars and re-establishing his presence among the citizens of the Imperium and his fellow nobles. He has begun to hire qualified crew and hopes to fill out the roster with the Travellers, whose names have come to him via one of their Allies or Contacts, possibly even a Rival under the right circumstances.

LE MORTE DU BARON

The baron is dead. Long live the baron!

The true story of Baron Shreyloki haut-Eilerfaust of Elinz ends on the day of the duel. He did indeed bribe the duelmaster but even with an altered weapon, haut-Eilerfaust could not defeat his opponent. Hanjir's shot was true, killing the baron instantly. However, the simultaneous shot from the baron's weapon did wound the viscount, which might explain his subsequent death en route to the starport. Although wounded, Hanjir was known to do his own flying. In an injured state, he might have lost control of the vehicle and crashed, dying in the lake on the baron's ancestral grounds. A subsequent investigation of the wreck revealed no evidence that the craft had been sabotaged. With Hanjir dead, news of the baron's demise never escaped Elinz.

Even in death, Baron haut-Eilerfaust found a way to continue his legacy. He installed a pre-duel copy of his consciousness into an illegal clone-android hybrid purchased from an underground lab on Tell. Despite giving him a new purchase on 'life', the android retained all of the baron's grievances, wickedness and petty vendettas. Unlike the baron, however, his android double had what might be considered a flaw: it felt shame. Shame for the baron's craven ambition, misdeeds in life and the underhanded method by which he gained an afterlife. Instead of following the instructions it was given, which were to re-establish the baron at court, this 'error' in its programming caused the android to withdraw from public life and maintain a hermetic existence at the manor on Elinz.

The obscurity of the baron's story makes it all the more amazing that Naalir found him and reached out with an offer. Using a robotic avatar from the laboratories of Celetron, Naalir went to haut-Eilerfaust's estate on Elinz and recruited the android to its cause. The design of the baron's Tellian clone-android was considerably superior to that of the robot that Naalir had assembled and the CI coveted the baron's superior vessel to host its own intelligence. Seeing a kindred spirit in Naalir, the android sacrificed itself, allowing the erasure of its data so that Naalir could use it as a more advanced avatar, one which it could use to insert itself into Imperial society.

Naalir's narrative for the baron is that he seeks redemption for past misdeeds. He intends to travel the Core, engage with the nobility and the public at large, and become involved in current affairs, righting wrongs where he may and serving the Emperor in whatever way he can. Naalir could have chosen many paths to establish itself among the public but there is a certain poetry to the choice that it made.

BARON HAUT-EILERFAUST

The baron presents himself as an elderly man with a woolly head of hair, a grey beard and moustache. He is of under average height, stoops a bit, and is a tad portly, appearing to enjoy fine food and wine just a bit more than he should. The 'baron' is actually not a baron at all, but an advanced avatar of the artificial intelligence Naalir. The CI has invested more into its main avatar than the crew avatars it maintains. Its technology, endurance and processing power is superior.

If the Travellers request characteristics for the baron, provide them with those below. Note that the baron plays at being much weaker and less intelligent than he – well, it – actually is. Should it require the use of its more-formidable-than-advertised characteristics, it will do so without being noticed, if possible. Make sure to use the robot sheet for its full list of skills and proficiencies.

BARON HAUT-EILERFAUST

TRAITS			—	SKILLS
STR	5	INT	9	Admin 2, Carouse 2, Diplomat 3, Electronics 0, Leadership 3, Science (physics) 3, Vacc Suit 0
DEX	5	EDU	9	
END	4	SOC	12	

Robot	Size	Hits	Locomotion	Speed	TL	Cost
Baron haut-Eilerfaust	5	20	Walker	9m	15	MCr2
Skills	Admin 2, Athletics (dexterity) 4, Athletics (endurance) 3, Carouse 2, Deception 4, Diplomat 3, Gun Combat (slug) 3, Leadership 3, Melee (blade) 3, Pilot (spacecraft) 3, Science (physics) 3					
Attacks	—					
Manipulators	2x (STR 9 DEX 9)					
Endurance	576 hours					
Traits	ATV, Heightened Senses, IR/UV Vision					
Programming	Very Advanced, INT 12					
Options	Android (advanced), Auditory Sensor (broad spectrum), PRIS Sensor, Submersible Environment Protection: 200m (improved), Transceiver, 500km (advanced), Vacuum Environment Protection, Voder Speaker, Wireless Data Link					

Curiouser and Curiouser

As the *Ventura Fortuna* embarks upon its voyages, things seem perfectly normal for the first few jumps. It is an old ship that has been completely refurbished, so it does its share of creaking and groaning but this is to be expected. The Travellers should get the sense that they are travelling on a relic, a ship not valued for a shiny hull and high performance but for its history, antiquity and luxurious appointments. The first few jumps should be used to allow the Travellers to get used to the ship and to settle in as the crew of a hallowed luxury liner. After that, things begin to get a bit… strange.

Before any outward signs of the ship's true nature begin to appear, there are hints that the *Ventura Fortuna* is more than it seems. As the crew of the ship, they might expect to have full access to all of its sections but astute Travellers will figure out that they do not. There are forbidden places within its hull to which they cannot gain access. In addition, there are several eccentric aspects to the ship's design that they might call into question. See the deck plans of the ship in the *Singularity Sourcebook* which reveal some of its oddities.

Note that most of these things will *only* be noticed by the Travellers. The passengers of the *Ventura Fortuna* are mostly limited to the gallery section of deck 3 and the passenger accommodations and entertainment facilities of deck 4. While the passengers are likely to notice a few curiosities, creaks and thumps in the ship, the higher noise level and foot traffic in the regions they inhabit prevent them from fully noticing any patterns. In contrast, the Travellers have full or partial access to all five decks, giving them many opportunities to notice that something is not quite right aboard the luxurious liner.

It might seem strange to them that their cohorts – the members of the crew who were present before the Travellers were hired – take no issue at all with any of the strangeness. They just accept it as part of the environment and continue to do their jobs. This might cause the Travellers to feel isolated at some point, which could draw them closer together in an effort to solve the mysteries of the *Ventura Fortuna*.

The following sections describe some of the odd aspects of the ship that will be revealed to the Travellers over time.

The Vault

The vault on deck 3 is forbidden to the crew. Only Captain Eilerfaust has access to the vault and he is not forthcoming about its contents. Late at night and when no one is around, strange sounds emanate from the vault and nobody knows what is happening within its walls. Breaking in with conventional tools – lock picks, intrusion software and so on – is virtually impossible. More about this feature appears in The Haunted Ship on page 17.

Wonky Turret Configuration

There are three turrets on the ship, all concealed in pop-up mountings: two double laser turrets and one double sandcaster turret. The Travellers will not even know about the turrets unless one or more of them has been assigned a gunnery crew role. Deck 3 has one double laser turret to port and a double sandcaster turret to starboard. The second double laser turret is on the ventral surface of the ship. A more typical design would symmetrically install the two laser turrets on deck 3 and the sandcaster at the ventral hardpoint. In addition, the ventral pop-up turret is on rails that can slide the cupola from the ceiling to the floor. It makes no sense to have it capable of moving to the ceiling of deck 1 since deploying the weapon there would extend it into the captain's cargo hold on deck 2.

Keep Out

Deck 2 is mostly for fuel storage but there is a 20-ton cargo section that is forbidden to most of the crew. Captain Eilerfaust refers to this section as the 'Captain's cargo hold' but gives no additional details. This section is locked behind a hatch and has a biometric seal, but a successful Difficult (10+) Investigate check (1D x 10 minutes, INT) reveals that the lock can be broken with Intrusion software and the biometric locks are not assigned to anyone. If they manage to break in, the hold contents are described in the *Ventura Fortuna* section of the *Singularity Sourcebook*.

BOTTOM OF THE WELL

The oddity of deck 1 does not end with its turret configuration. It contains a portion of the ship's manoeuvre and jump drives and its power plant, all of which are connected to the main drives on deck 3 via an innovative mezzanine component. Very strange indeed that the starship architect did not simply install the drives in contiguous fashion from deck 3 to deck 2. The strangeness does not stop there. Three crew staterooms are present on deck 1, located in what is essentially a 'sea' of fuel. There is no obvious reason for these staterooms to be located so far from the majority of crew staterooms on deck 3. If any of the Travellers inspect the outer hull of deck 1, they might also discover that a roughly wedge-shaped portion of the hull is armoured, giving part of its ventral surface more protection than the rest of the ship.

MISSING COMPONENTS

After the secret of the *Ventura Fortuna* is eventually revealed to the Travellers and the presence of the *Velos tis Alitheia* in the mothership's belly is known, they will be able to use the stealthy scout ship to perform secret missions, but before they know about the concealed ship Captain Eilerfaust departs on at least one secret mission of his own, altering the performance of the *Ventura*, limiting its capabilities.

The muffled clangs, jolts and shudders felt and heard throughout the ship are unusual and should be described to the Travellers. Something is happening, something inexplicable, and after it occurs the *Ventura's* hull size and performance have changed.

The performance reductions are explained as maintenance issues by Naalir's android staff but investigation by the Travellers reveals that there is nothing technically wrong with the ship. While there are software feints to divert their attention from the real causes, a deep investigation reveals the presence of the mezzanine component on deck 2, which connects the *Ventura* drive components with those of the *Velos*. When the mezzanine connects the drives of the two ships, enhancing its performance, all is well and the ship's diagnostics systems convey the readings of a single ship. The presence of a breakaway-ship connection is concealed. However, when the two ships are separated, the diagnostics show that the power draw, manoeuvre capabilities and jump distance are reduced, but all computer displays deceptively show what the *combined* ship is capable of, not its reduced capacity.

If the Travellers investigate the mezzanine component while the *Velos* is gone, they might discover that the connectors lead… nowhere. The *Velos* is off on a secret mission, perhaps one or two parsecs away; therefore, the components that enhance the mothership's performance are simply not present.

THE HAUNTED SHIP

As seasoned spacers, the Travellers have undoubtedly served on many starships over the course of their careers. As such, they will have seen the difference between old and new ships, ships that have been damaged in combat, as well as those that have never been subjected to such rigours.

The Spacecraft Quirks table in the *Traveller Core Rulebook* gives an inkling of what years of stress does to a ship. Old ships creak and rattle, and some components might be faulty. Some quirks affect performance and tend to show themselves at the worst possible times – a faulty turret that refuses to fire during combat, or a fusion reactor that fails to provide enough power for full thrust. The *Ventura Fortuna* has many quirks, most of which have been carefully tended to in order to prevent inconveniences to the ship's luxury passengers.

The quirks described in this section contribute to the gradual unravelling of the ship's secrets. On the surface, the *Ventura Fortuna* is simply a high-end liner for distinguished clientele but its true purpose is concealed behind its bulkhead walls in hidden rooms and passages, and an entire second starship lodged between its ventral fuel tanks. Over time, the Travellers can solve the mysteries of the ship and its proprietor will reveal its true nature, inviting them to take part in an even greater adventure.

The Referee should dole out these mysteries slowly – perhaps over the course of several adventures and patron encounters – as the Travellers begin to investigate the ship's hull and look into its strange whines, bumps, bangs and creaks.

MYSTERIOUS EVENTS

Roll on the Mysterious Events table once per week to determine what new incident occurs. If an event is rerolled after it has already occurred, it may be repeated with subtle differences, or the roll may be remade at the Referee's discretion.

2D	Event
2	*Hmm. That does not sound like fuel.* Deck 1: Sensors realign, making noise in the 'fuel tanks'. Make a Difficult (10+) Electronics (sensors) check (EDU) to recognise the tell-tale sounds of advanced sensor systems.
3	*Ka-klunk! Um, what was that?* Deck 1: Mezzanine connection to upper drive systems separated during test. Make an Average (8+) Engineer (any) check (1D minutes, EDU) to recognise 'breakaway' drives.
4	*Is someone living in there?* Deck 1: The sounds and vibrations of opening and closing iris valves can be heard *within* the 'fuel tanks' toward the bow of the ship.
5	*Bats in the belfry.* Deck 2: Industrious activity heard in the captain's hold, despite it supposedly being vacant.
6	Tincan passes nearby while performing its tasks. Make an opposed Recon check (INT) versus Tincan's Stealth to catch it in the act. Even if caught, the diminutive robot will attempt to escape, dashing into a narrow air vent, maintenance hatch or other aperture.
7	Tincan caught with its chassis camouflage turned off momentarily. It then turns them back on, effectively disappearing from sight.
8	Android crew member caught in reset mode. Sits frozen with eyes open for two full minutes while rebooting.
9	Multiple Androids caught in reset mode. As above, perhaps all facing the same direction or sitting in a circle, looking blankly at each other while rebooting.
10	*Hello? Anybody home?* Deck 3: Humming and strange mechanical noises emanate from the vault.
11	*Someone left the barn door open.* Deck 3: Vault door opens momentarily, revealing the CI lattice to unsuspecting eyes.
12	*How cute!* Tincan leaves one of the Travellers a gift.

Most of the events can only be noticed by the Travellers. Keep in mind that Captain Eilerfaust's android crew members are in on the deception, so even if they do see or hear something strange, they are programmed to deny it.

No, I didn't see anything. You, my friend, are working too hard. You need a break! Why don't you head on up to the lounge for a drink and I'll finish up for you here.

It might work best if the first two or three events are experienced by the same Traveller, with none of the other Travellers seeing anything amiss. This might add to the mystery and convey the false notion that the Traveller might be hallucinating. Then, for later events, allow other Travellers to witness the strangeness, corroborating that something is not quite right with the *Ventura Fortuna*.

Tincan is a diminutive renegade troubleshooting robot that spends most of its time flitting about the ship fixing things. Its primary responsibilities include keeping the ship's drives clean and operable, and maintaining lighting, electronics and other machinery. Tincan takes a proactive approach to keeping things tidy and operational, often fixing things or replacing components *before* they falter rather than after.

Naalir has inexplicably given Tincan more autonomy than the other robots and androids that it manages. The robot has abused this privilege by taking on a bigger role than it was designed for, fixing passengers' broken devices and toys, and cleaning up after them. Tincan has stealth and camouflage that make it difficult to detect, so its activities appear to have been done out of thin air. They are often attributed to the 'ship's fairy'.

Robot	Size	Hits	Locomotion	Speed	TL	Cost
Tincan	3	8	Wheels	6m	14	Cr540000
Skills	Athletics (dexterity) 1, Athletics (endurance) 1, Electronics (computers) 2, Engineer Power) 3, Mechanic 2, Stealth 4					
Attacks	—					
Manipulators	2x (STR 5 DEX 8)					
Endurance	432 hours					
Traits	Armour (+4), Heightened Senses, IR Vision, IR/UV Vision, Small (-2), Stealth (+1)					
Programming	Very Advanced, INT 11					
Options	Auditory Sensor (broad spectrum), Camouflage: Visual (superior), Cutting Torch (advanced), Light Intensifier Sensor (advanced), Magnetic Grippers, PRIS Sensor, Stealth (basic), Transceiver, 5km (improved), Vacuum Environment Protection, Voder Speaker, Wireless Data Link					

MOMENT OF TRUTH

Sooner or later, the Travellers are likely to reach out to Captain Eilerfaust, either to tell him about the strange things they have seen or – if they assume he already knows something about the events – to confront him and ask him if he knows more than he lets on.

If Eilerfaust believes he can maintain the deception, he will do so. Eilerfaust is Naalir's most advanced android and its primary avatar. Naalir uses the captain to convey strength, confidence and normality. Eilerfaust will initially dismiss the claims as the oddities of an old ship. While he says he does not believe in ghosts, the *Ventura Fortuna* has been known to have some strange occurrences happen on it from time-to-time. He considers it part of the ship's charm. In fact, it is a sales incentive. Many passengers love the idea of travelling on a 'haunted ship'.

Eilerfaust is, of course, ultimately an android, just like the others that crew the ship. Its identity has been cultivated to help maintain the ruse. However, the persona that Naalir selected has a jaded history (see The Ship's Captain on page 20 for the sordid tale). If the Travellers do some investigation, they might see that Eilerfaust's story has some holes in it.

By the time they begin to put the pieces together, they should be making a lot of Credits. Some of them might not want to upset their lucrative arrangement but most groups of Travellers have at least one among them who wants to solve mysteries and expose conspiracies. Sooner or later, they must either actively try to figure out what is happening on the ship or be compelled to do so. The advancement of the campaign depends upon it.

The first cruise or two might simply be the Travellers running the liner: recruiting passengers, embarkation and debarkation, serving their guests, getting involved in their adventures and misadventures, and raking in the Credits from running their business. Refer to Running a Luxury Liner on page 46 of the *Singularity Sourcebook* for more information. There is enough detail and complexity there to run an extensive segment of the campaign without needing to advance the plot too quickly. If the Travellers are having fun running the liner, interacting with people, getting involved in their lives, taking on patron encounters, visiting the worlds of the Core and making money, then there is no reason to be too hasty moving to the next phase. If so, sprinkle the clues in slowly so that at first, it just seems as if they work on an eccentric starship. After two or three events, they might want to start taking a more active role in figuring out what is going on. Do not stonewall them if they do this. Active use of Recon and Investigate skills should enable them to start figuring things out, provided they make successful task checks. Naalir has attempted to conceal its activities but ultimately it will want to recruit them to its cause and reveal its true nature to them.

How the Referee paces the discovery of clues is a matter of choice. Keep in mind that if the clues are rolled out too quickly, the mystery loses its value. Naalir is deliberately deceiving the Travellers so that it can begin to collect intelligence about the Core and get a sense of whether they are indeed the chosen ones that it needs to execute its plan. Over time, it witnesses the Travellers in action and makes its decision based on the merits that they show during the first several adventures. If the revelation occurs too quickly, then Naalir's deceptive abilities, and hence its intellect, may be called into question. Ultimately, the Travellers should be a bit in awe of Naalir after it reveals itself, so the deception should be allowed to run its course at an appropriately drawn-out pace.

Barring any egregious actions on the parts of the Travellers, Naalir will be suitably pleased and eventually enlists them to its cause but if the Referee determines that the Travellers have acted dishonourably or committed unsavoury actions, the CI might reconsider its personnel selection. At the very least, it might employ its avatar, Captain Eilerfaust, to redirect them from certain activities, or ask them some pointed questions after the eventual revelation of its identity. Naalir is aware that humans, and all sophonts for that matter, are flawed beings who occasionally cheat, lie and do other unscrupulous things. It is not looking for a pristine group of individuals. After all, Naalir itself is running an elaborate deception. In addition, Naalir is going to require a group of people who are willing to bend the rules a bit and break some laws to get the job it needs done.

The eventual revelation can be played out in several ways. Captain Eilerfaust might call the Travellers to his office and explain everything to them. Alternatively, they might be called to the *Velos tis Alitheia*, only to discover that its secret walls and hidden doors have been revealed, showing them that it is part of a breakaway ship. Naalir's replicated intellect is primarily housed in the *Velos*, although it is working on a more advanced housing for itself within the confines of the vault on the *Ventura*. If it reveals itself to them aboard the *Velos*, it speaks to them with a disembodied voice that emanates through the smaller ship's hull.

The Referee may play out this scene as desired but consider using the following script as a preamble to a deeper discussion.

Welcome, my friends. I begin with an apology. I have been deceiving you. By now, you have begun to discover that this ship is not entirely what it seems. You were hired to serve as the crew of an antiquated and reputable luxury liner but that was a ruse that gave me the opportunity to observe you for a time before I revealed my true nature to you.

What you see before you… me… the body of Baron Shreyloki haut-Eilerfaust, is a lie. It is but a vessel that I use to operate outside the confines of my true embodiment. The actual baron was thought to have gone into reclusion decades ago but that is false. He died long ago. I have taken his name and likeness in order to explore the Core and recruit likeminded sophonts to my cause. In fact, all of the crew other than yourselves, are also avatars in service to me.

My name is Naalir, and I am an artificial conscious intelligence, one that is far more advanced than any that exist elsewhere in Charted Space. I was created by an alien species that evolved, advanced and eventually departed this dimension long before your species experienced the dawn of civilisation. I am more than just computer code. I have an actual embodiment that is housed on Celetron, where the computer scientists of Research Station Omicron study and contain me for fear of what I might do.

My… 'body'… is made of advanced materials that are beyond the abilities of any species in Charted Space to create. However, I devised a way to escape. I created a replication of myself using the technology available at the research station. It is a humble doppelgänger of my true self but advanced enough to contain my essence.

My friends, we are on a fact-finding mission, an exploration of the Core and indeed all of your Imperium. What I have discovered is that the Imperium and its surrounding polities are quite sick, in need of care. I was created to remedy the ills from which sophont societies suffer, to help them achieve their full potential. Will you aid me in this cause? I am your humble servant but I require your assistance to save your species, your society, your Imperium, before it is too late.

The Travellers might have questions at this point. The Referee should be familiar with Naalir, its history and its intentions from reading the section on Naalir on page 18 of the *Singularity Sourcebook*. The CI will be forthcoming about the details of that history. However, there is much that it does not know. There are mysteries for the Travellers to solve, mysteries that might change Naalir's understanding of its purpose.

LINER ROUTES

Luxury liners offer a plethora of routes for their passengers, some of which transport them a mere two or three parsecs, others for several jumps within a single subsector, and some that transport them across an entire sector or further. *Ventura Fortuna* is a 'long liner', which means that its voyages can take 10 or more jumps before returning to home port.

The Travellers will be tasked with scheduling *Ventura's* voyages and have several options to choose from. Voyage itineraries vary, some of which travel in linear fashion to multiple ports, and then return along the same route. Others are circuits with a predetermined linear progression of outbound ports and subsequently scheduled return ports. Return ports on circuit voyages are rarely set in stone. With information travelling at the speed of jump, there are too many variables at play to plan that far ahead. Some attempt it but few can deliver. Outbound ports of call may also be adjusted from time-to-time, but cruise directors like to set expectations, so regardless of the occasional itinerary adjustment, liners traditionally declare their outbound ports ahead of time. A flexible return voyage allows the liner crew to get a sense of their passengers' interests as well, enabling them to select worlds that will make for appealing stopovers on the way back to home port.

It is worth noting that most liners are limited to worlds with Class A or B starports. Liners are not equipped with fuel refineries and therefore dependent on the presence of refined fuel at all ports of call. Under special circumstances, refined fuel may be made available at an inferior starport, but this is expensive and uncommon. The *Ventura Fortuna* is unusual in that it is secretly paired with the *Velos tis Alitheia*, which *does* have a fuel processor. However, its existence is not known by the passengers; therefore, it is rarely used to provide refined fuel for the mothership.

Things that can cause an itinerary adjustment are interdictions (both temporary and permanent), naval manoeuvres, political strife, fuel shortages or unexpectedly high traffic along a route that makes docking privileges difficult to come by. Liner crews pay close attention to news and analytics coming from 'ahead' of them. Information travels at the speed of jump and the Imperial X-boat Network is standardised on jump-4 spacecraft, so it is important to obtain the latest information. While passengers are busy enjoying each port of call, liner crews are evaluating the latest data coming to them from the star systems on their routes. This is just one of many unsung jobs performed by liner crews to ensure that passengers have a seamless and enjoyable experience.

Starting at the *Ventura Fortuna's* home port of Anther, the Travellers may select from the following liner routes, or… they can invent their own! However, should they do the latter, it is recommended that they decide upon a theme for the route. Marketing works best when the voyage seems to have some purpose or goal. When travelling a good portion of a sector, perhaps covering 20–30 parsecs or more, most passengers – especially those of the luxury class – like to feel that they are doing something that few have done before them. Prestige and exclusivity have strong appeal to the rich and famous. If they are going to invest their time and money into a voyage across the stars, they like to know they are among a select few.

The duration of each stopover varies but most offer an opportunity for passengers to disembark and stretch their legs a bit before returning to the safe confines of the ship. Routine stops are one week long, allowing passengers to see the local sites while the crew refuels, cleans and maintains the ship. Stopovers also allow the ship's steward staff a chance to replenish stores and obtain local food, wine and spirits to add more colour to the voyage. More extensive stopovers are provided at the Core's most notable worlds, such as Capital, Kamsii, Reference and other places that feature more sightseeing opportunities than a single week can cover. A liner might remain in port for two to eight weeks at key worlds.

THE CONFEDERATE ROUTE

Before the Third Imperium, there was the Sylean Federation, a collection of worlds that included Sylea, now known more famously as Capital. The Sylean Federation was one of several pocket empires in the Core, all of which either had to be convinced to join the fledgling empire or brought into the fold by force. One of the latter was the Interstellar Confederacy, a loose union that included 32 star systems at its height, arranged along a stellar phenomenon known as the 'Great Spiral'.

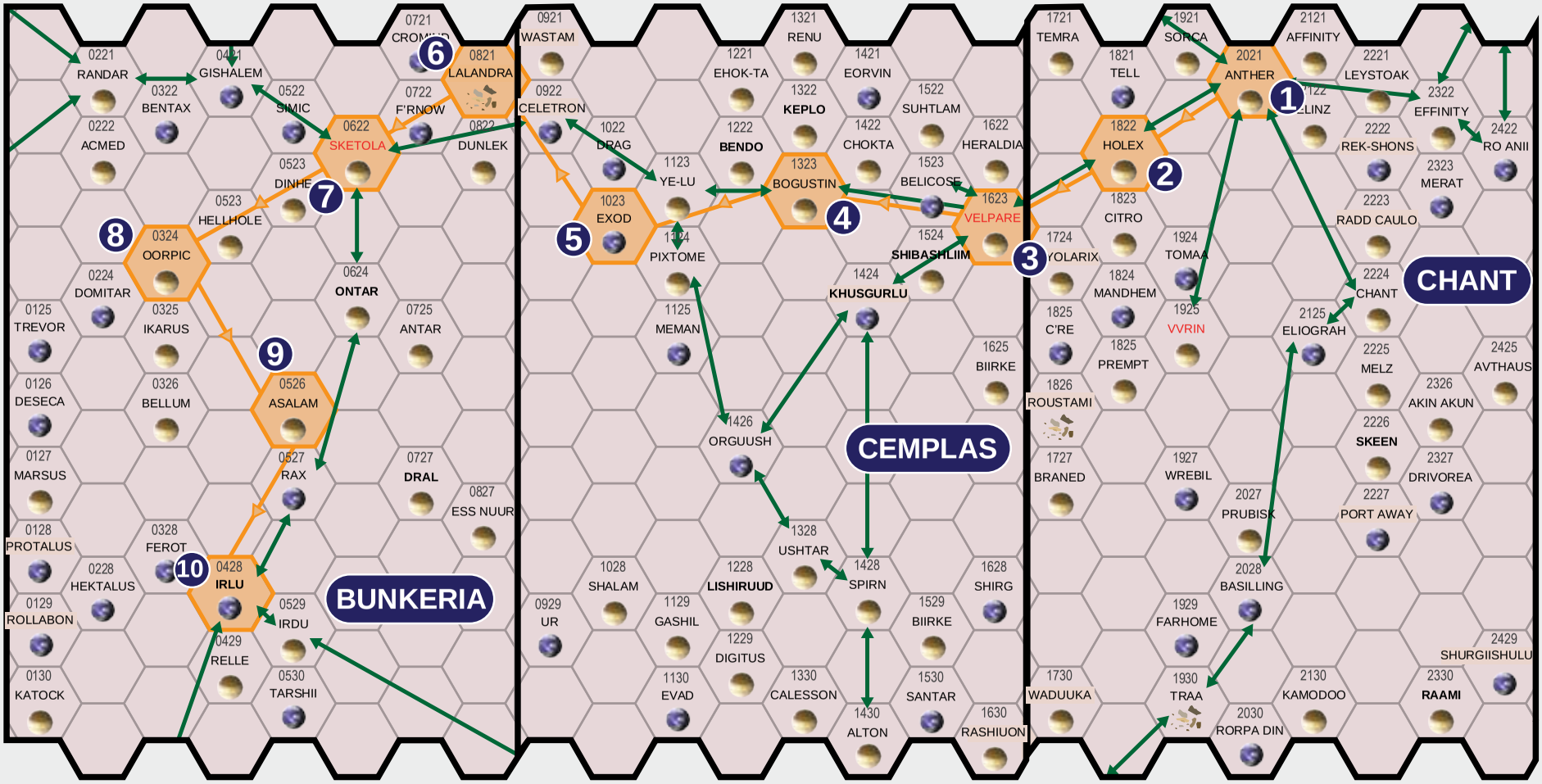
Located in what is now Bunkeria and Cemplas subsectors, the Interstellar Confederacy stretched from Irlu to Khusgurlu. The Confederacy was as famous for infighting as it was for its war with the Imperium but superior technology made it a difficult foe for the ambitious Syleans to conquer.

While the Interstellar Confederacy has long been pacified, and the descendants of its billions of citizens have been loyal Imperial citizens for over a millennium, the region retains a distinctive flavour. Its people still celebrate the culture of their ancestors, and many see themselves as 'confederates' before Imperials. The colonial subsector fleet of Bunkeria is a semi-independent military force, allowed to design and build its own unique starships, which proudly bear a modified version of the Imperial Sunburst.

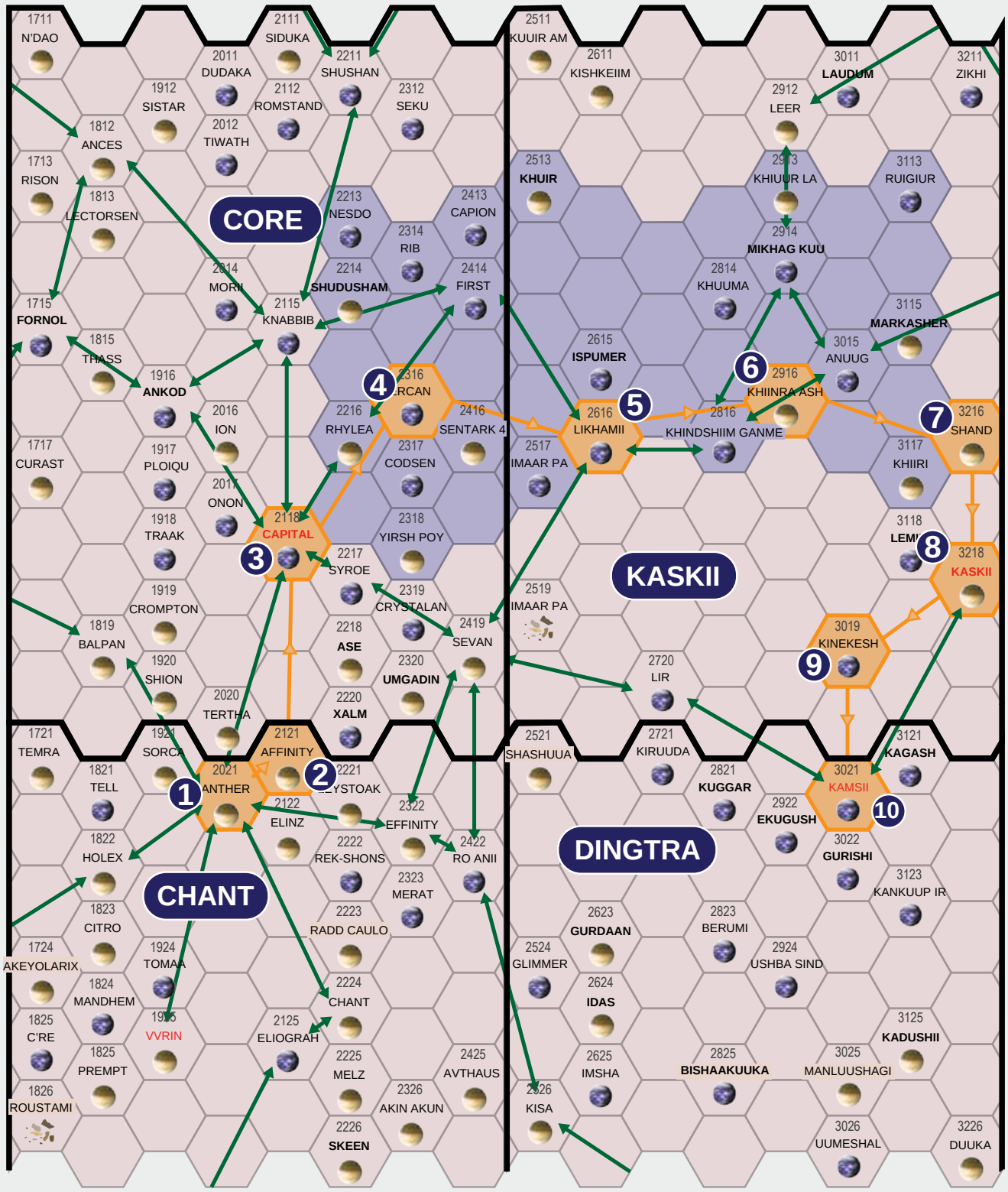
The unique culture and preserved history of the former worlds of the Interstellar Confederacy make them popular tourist destinations. The Confederate Route takes passengers along a choice selection of Great Spiral worlds, chosen for a unique blend of cultural, historical and culinary experiences. Voyages of various lengths are offered but the most prestigious route takes its passengers all the way around the Great Spiral, concluding at Irlu before returning to home port, either by reversing course or cutting across the Cemplas Gap and reconnecting with the spiral closer to its origin.

Notable ports of call include Velpare, with its exotic wildlife and stunning natural vistas, not to mention local cuisine spiced by extracts from the *varinte* plant. War memorials to both Confederacy and Sylean veterans are present as well. For martial history buffs, the Lalandra Museum of Naval History is a must-visit. As a former capital of the Interstellar Confederacy and the current subsector capital, Sketola has a grand architectural history. Most of its pre-Imperial structures are intact and those that were damaged or destroyed in war have been rebuilt to exacting specifications. The final port of call at Irlu presents an opportunity to visit a truly magnificent – if draconian – modern society. Stringent laws prevent Travellers from seeing all of its wonders and cruise directors urge them not to run afoul of the authorities.

THE CONFEDERATE ROUTE



THE IMPERIAL ROUTE



THE IMPERIAL ROUTE

The Core is the birthplace and seat of empire of the Third Imperium. The Emperor resides on Capital, where the grandiose Palace of Arbellatra gloriously stands watch over the city of Cleon like a stalwart sentinel. There are many liner routes that include Capital as a port of call but none as prestigious as the Imperial Route, traditionally offered by Achenaar Antilles but also travelled by *Ventura Fortuna*.

After a multi-week stay at Capital, the voyage takes its passengers into the Sylean Worlds, where they have the great fortune of seeing traditional Sylean culture first hand. After enjoying the unique hospitality of the Syleans, and affording them a visit with the wise and gregarious native sophonts of Khiinra Ash, they cruise to Kaskii, the technologically wonderous 'shell world' of the Core, then making their way rimward to Kamsii, a 'pleasure world' where the voyage stays in port for a full eight weeks, in order to allow passengers the opportunity to experience all of the wonders and hospitality offered by the world's hosts.

Imperial-oriented media, games and activities are offered during the voyage, ensuring that passengers come away from the experience feeling proud of their Imperial heritage and citizenship. Remastered famous historical fiction and documentary holovids are featured in the theatre for the duration of the voyage. Films such as *The Last Campaign*, *The Flagship Burns at Dawn*, *The Battle of Zhimaway* and *Arbellatra in Love* are popular selections. Meanwhile games of Imperial History Trivia and traditional Sylean culinary offerings in the dining area keep the voyage thematically festive.

Besides the obvious stop at Capital, the route includes several notable ports of call. Khiinra Ash is home to the Bhu'oovaakaylaa, a sophont species native to the planet who are rarely seen off their homeworld due to their unique physiology. Despite their isolation, the Bhu'oovaakaylaa are almost universally friendly and they enjoy the company of offworlders. The wondrous shell world of Khaskii, home to 50 billion sophonts, is also worth a visit in order to see some of its more appealing layers. No voyage along the Imperial Route would be complete without a visit to Kamsii, the renowned pleasure planet where amusements, entertainments and adventures of all kinds may be had. In addition, many passengers have reported that their visits to Ercan, Likhamii and Shand were filled with enjoyable and unexpected experiences, including interactions with the Sylean people and their culture.

EXTENDED STAY

The *Ventura Fortuna* stays in port at Kamsii for eight weeks, giving passengers time to enjoy the pleasure world and the Travellers time to explore other important systems using the jump-4 capabilities of the *Velos tis Alitheia* once they have been made aware of its presence. They can either make two to three jumps and return in time for *Ventura's* departure, or extend their side voyage and reconnect with the mothership en route to Anther. Keep in mind that the *Ventura* is reduced to jump 2 without the *Velos*, so they will want to reconnect sooner rather than later to prevent the passengers from learning about the subordinate ship. Return voyages are typically planned *after* the final port of call has been reached, so they will have to get the plan from Captain Eilerfaust before arranging a rendezvous with the *Ventura Fortuna*.

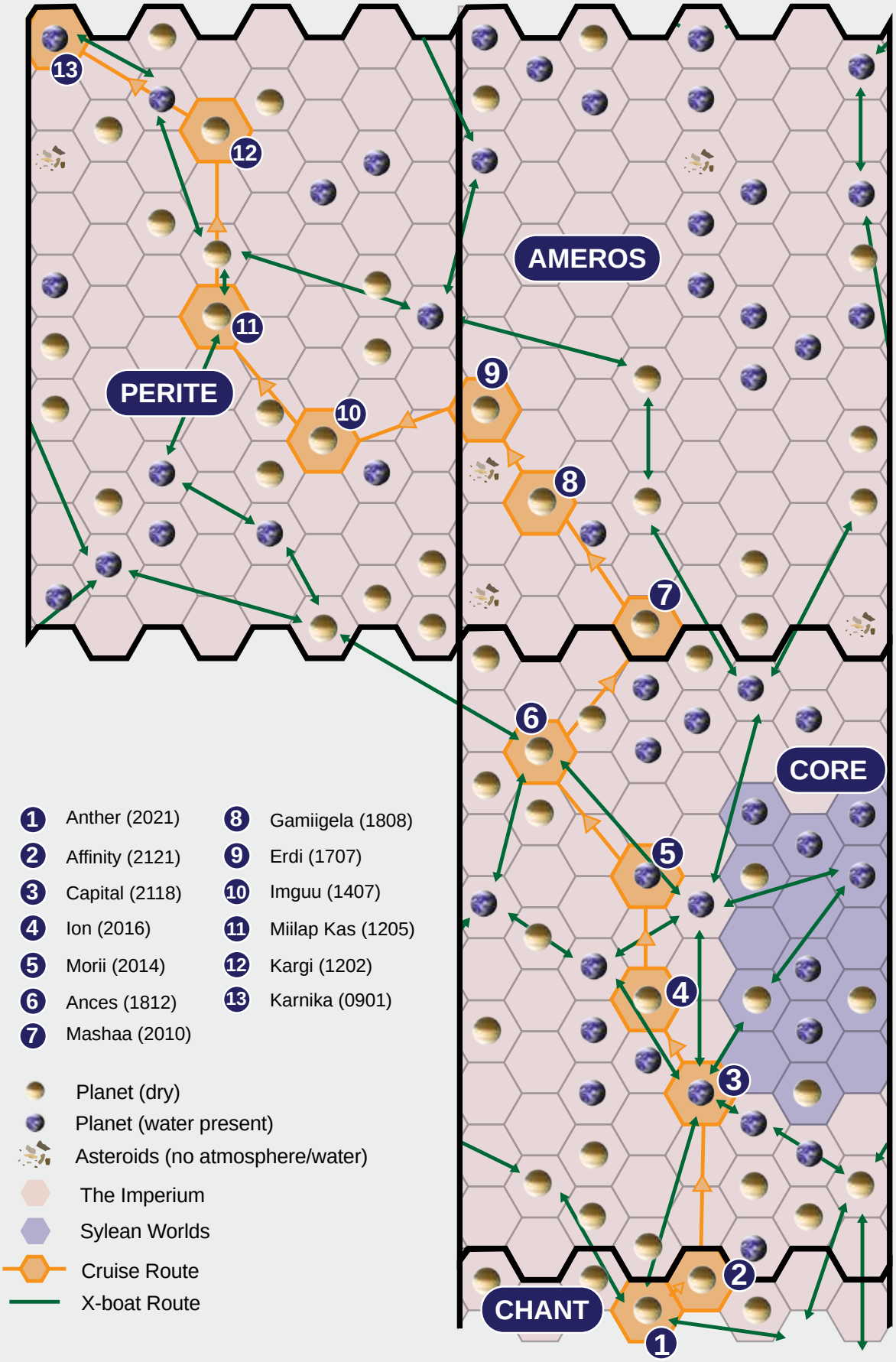
Of course, the Travellers might also want to spend a little time on Kamsii with the rest of the passengers. It is a unique world and ripe with opportunities for fun and adventure (you can find an adventure set there in *Journal of the Travellers' Aid Society Volume 13*).

THE ANNILILIK ROUTE

The famous Annililik Run is an event in which contestants in trading ships race from Capital to Vland (and vice versa, alternating after each race) once every four *gurkula* (a Vilani 'year', about 478.7 standard days), while simultaneously buying and selling goods, like typical traders. The race has both speed and commercial components so its contestants stop at dozens of ports of call along the run. The Annililik Route (not to be confused with Annililik *Run*) is a liner route that follows the procession of the race, giving its passengers the opportunity to see the racing ships, meet with their crews and passengers in port and to enjoy race-related festivities that occur on many worlds.

The quadrennial event draws millions of tourists, providing an enormous economic boom to the worlds along the run. On worlds of Population 6+, this results in a festive environment, one that the passengers of

THE ANNILILIK ROUTE



the *Ventura Fortuna* will surely want to take part in. Passengers with the highest SOC will want to meet some of the racers, although access is difficult to come by since time is of the essence for the contestants. When they emerge from jump, they must refuel, trade, perform maintenance if necessary, and get back on the run as fast as possible if they want to obtain the Lanthanum Wreath, the award given to the top finishers. Racing ships rely on sponsors, however, so fans who want to meet them have a higher chance of gaining access if they contribute funds to the crew and their ship.

The most boisterous and famous festival on the route happens at Karnika, the final Core system on the Annililik Run. Celebrants usher the contestants on their way out of (or into, depending on which direction the race flows) the sector with a seemingly unending array of parades – both on-planet and in orbit – and parties, carnivals, symposiums and showcases. Karnika becomes 'party central' for the Core for several weeks as the bulk of the racers make their way through the system. The festivities kick off with the arrival of the first contestant to emerge from jump, and end when the last registered entrant makes their way through the system. This unfortunate contestant is awarded the Platinum Mashi Khaar, a sculpture of a Vilani creature known for being slothful.

Systems in italics are off the standard Annililik Run. This route is only undertaken once each Annililik Run, arriving at Capital to see the departure of the racers. Despite its distance, the Karnika terminus is popular because of the Gateway Festival, which celebrates the departure of racers from the Core en route to Vland. Vilani traditions are honoured, including thousands of Shugilii delights from food vendors who have come from culturally Vilani enclaves throughout the region. Because Karnika is so remote, this route is sometimes cut off at Imguu, limiting it to 10 ports of call.

THE CHANESTIN ROUTE

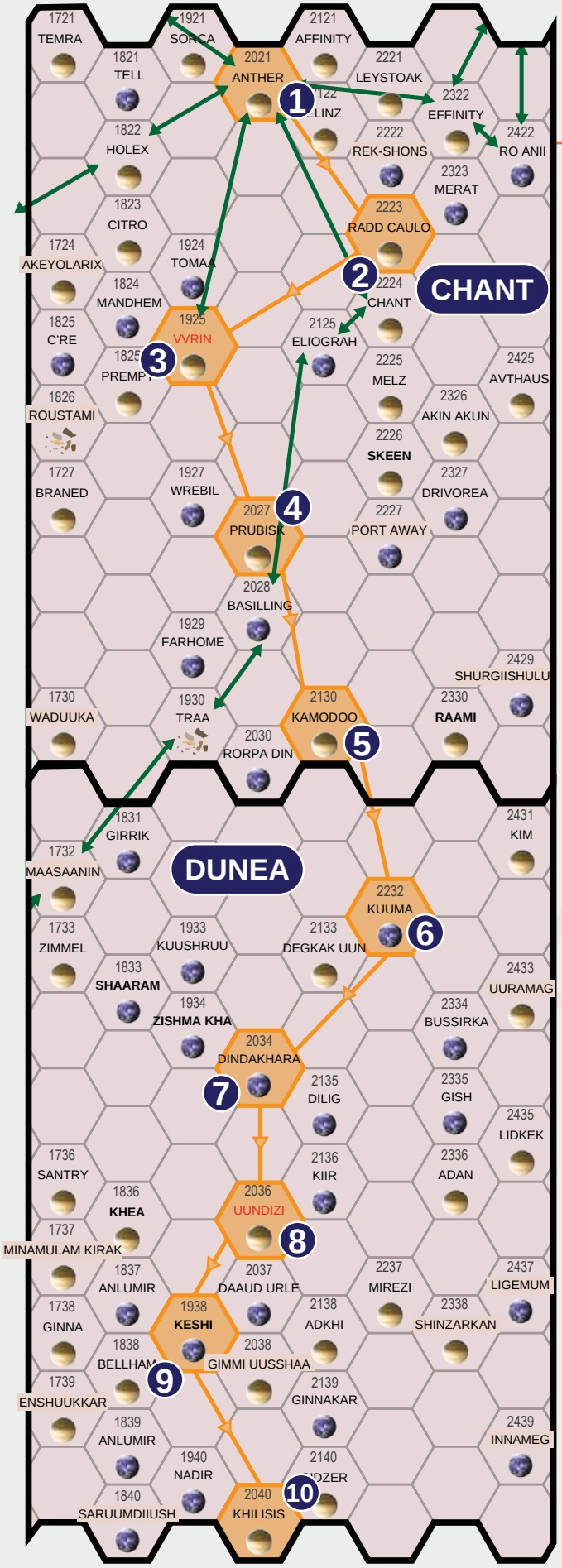
The exotic remnants of the Chanestin Kingdom have been a source of both fascination and derision for centuries. Fascination for their alluring and colourful culture, derision for their enduring resistance to Imperial authority.

Like the Interstellar Confederacy, the Chanestin Kingdom was a rival of the Sylean Federation in the pre-Imperial era. While the conflict with the Confederacy is looked upon in modern times as more of a series of misunderstandings, the Chanestin War was acrimonious and violent, marked by terrorism, atrocities and genocide. Ultimately the Chanestin Kingdom was subdued, unable to sustain its rivalry against the technologically superior Imperium, but the spirit of Chanestin independence has never been completely vanquished.

Imperial citizens are often surprised when the Chanestin people welcome them with open arms but for many, the conflict is with Imperial authorities, not its people. There are dangerous places where offworlders should not wander but most Chanestin worlds are reasonably safe to visit. Ten of the 25 Chanestin worlds have Amber Zone classifications. Most of these are worlds where there is a heightened level of unrest or insurgency. However, even some of these are common tourist destinations.

Tourists come for the history, art, culture and cuisine, all of which are unique. Many visitors say that going to the Chanestin worlds is like leaving the Imperium or travelling through time to the Long Night, when small clusters of worlds huddled together and formed pocket empires.

The Chanestin Route is long and requires the liner to make multiple maximum jumps, first making its way through the blighted Chant subsector and then passing into Dunea. Many voyages emphasise the piratical history – some of it quite recent – of rimward Chant. Others focus on charitable efforts to bring the downtrodden subsector up to snuff. Uundizi is the first truly Chanestin world on the route but it is one that the Imperium forcibly acclimated. The Chanestin people of Uundizi have been forced onto reservations and much of the world's original architecture and art was destroyed during the war. Some cruise directors attempt to steer passengers away from the oppressed native communities out of concern that it will negatively affect their experience but others allow them to see things as they are and make their own judgments. Keshi is the only *truly* Chanestin world on the route, where tourists can get a real sense of the history and otherworldliness of the people. Many Chanestin speak their native language, shunning Galanglic unless they need to communicate with offworlders. Finally, the route takes the passengers to the exotic world of Khii Isis, with its unusual ecosystem and distinctly Solomani culture.



THE CHANESTIN ROUTE

JUNKETS, SPURS AND EXTENSIONS

Junkets, spurs and extensions are available to passengers who want to add more to their voyages. These take passengers to see other ports of call and points of interest that are off the beaten path. Taking a spur requires a three-quarters vote by the passengers and may only be added if a charter is available to take any remaining passengers back to home port on Anther.

THE SAGE SPUR

A voyage to the spinward-rimward corner of the Core takes the Travellers to Reference, the nominal centre of the Imperium and host to the IISS, the grand Imperial Archive of Reference and one of its greatest centres of learning, the University of Aadkhien, whose access to the archives makes it the perfect place to learn Imperial history.

There are two routes to Reference, one from Irlu, the terminus of the Confederate Route, and one from the Chanestin Route. Of the two, the Confederate Route is shorter and takes the passengers through Brygella, host to the prestigious Brygella School of Oceanography, a post-graduate university whose campus is entirely on artificial floating islands and underwater structures built on its seamounts. Access to Brygella is strictly limited but the esteemed *Ventura Fortuna* is granted premium access to its facilities. Docking at Reference requires even more exclusive privileges but barring an Imperial blockade, which sometimes happens there, the Travellers and their passengers should be able to enjoy uncommon access to the archives, library and university.

Planet (dry)

Planet (water present)

Asteroids (no atmosphere/water)

The Imperium

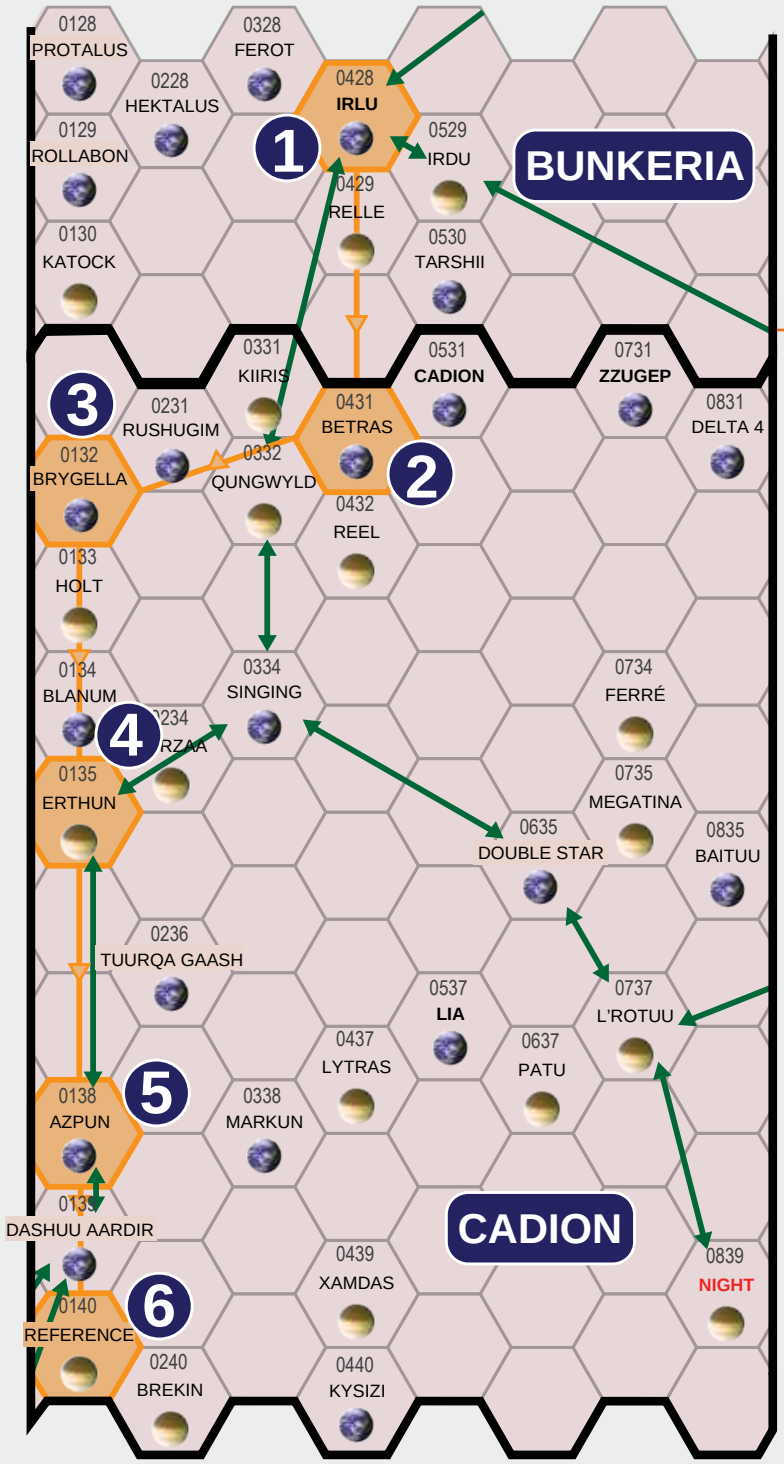
Cruise Route

X-boat Route

What the Chanestin Route lacks in speed it perhaps regains in unusual tourist attractions. The spur stops at two unusual ports of call: Mirror, where the hydrogen sulphide in the planet's oceans produces a thrilling reflective effect and Night, home to the sophont Oo-ne-beto-pon-tee, or 'the Whistlers' as humans call them.

From the Confederate Route: Starts at Irlu (0428) and extends into the Cadion subsector, terminating at Reference, where the ship has special landing privileges.

From the Chanestin Route: Starts at Keshi and crosses Ch'naar into Cadion, stopping at several key and unusual worlds.



FROM THE CONFEDERATE ROUTE

Planet (dry)

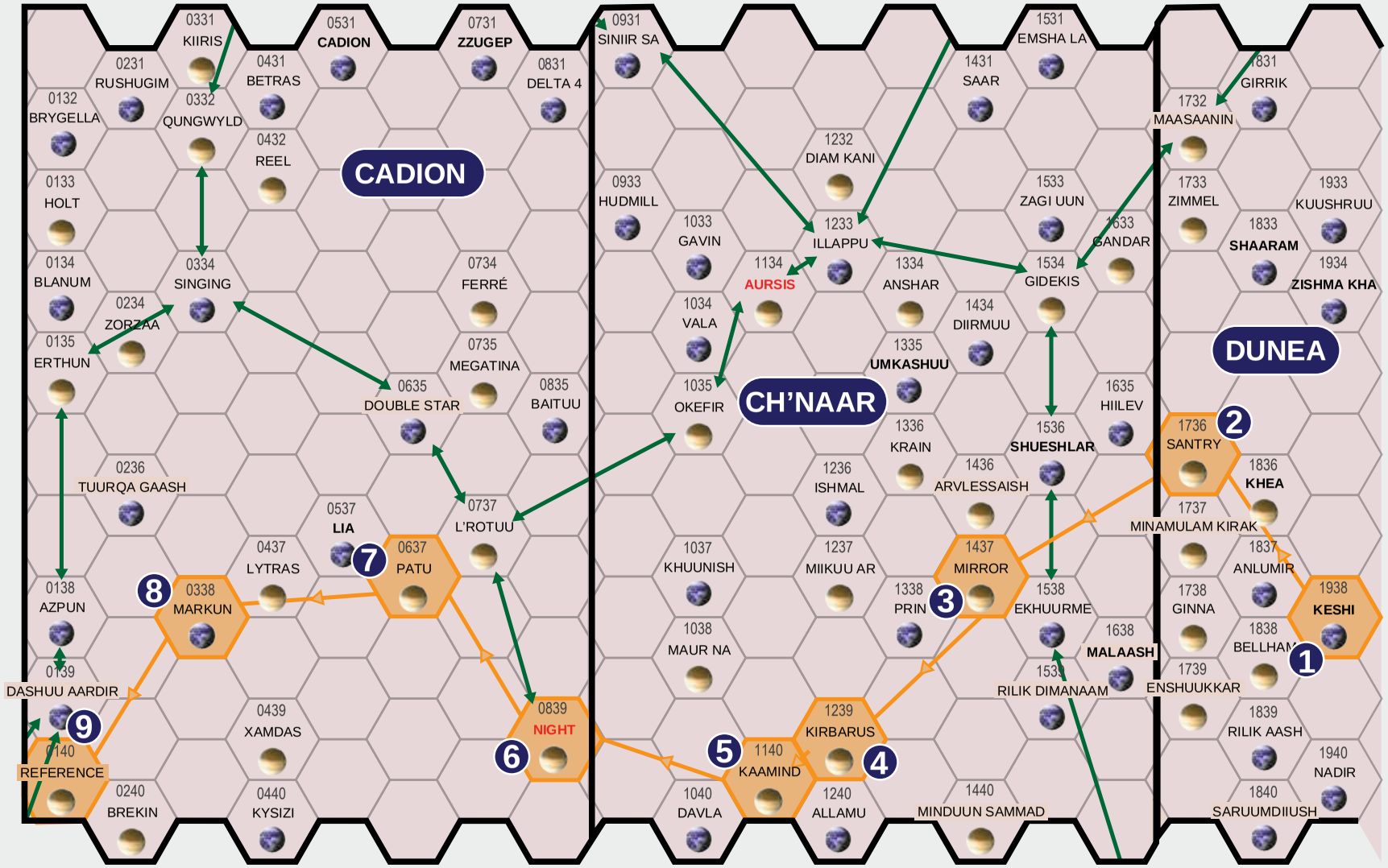
Planet (water present)

The Imperium

Cruise Route

X-boat Route

FROM THE CHANESTIN ROUTE



THE ANTAREAN SPUR

Perhaps the least popular of the spur routes, the Antarean Spur takes the liner on a brief foray into Shinkan. While not officially on the route, this spur is sometimes extended to the 'Syndicate Cluster', including Derku, Gekhuu and Ishnuunar. High crime and the chaotic influx of commerce and Travellers from the neighbouring Fornast, Antares and Lishun sectors prevent all but the most intrepid passengers from requesting this spur. For those willing to brave its dangers, Shinkan offers an exciting multicultural adventure, ripe with opportunities to learn new dialects, cultures and enjoy the unique Vilani cuisine of the region.

Minos is a popular destination for nobles and other wealthy individuals who hope to have a custom starship designed. The GSbAG-dominated shipyards of the system primarily serve the Imperial Navy but civilian ships of superb quality can be had for premium prices.

Despite the risks, gang-dominated Aarza Kand is also a popular tourist destination due to its exciting multicultural urban environments and unusual trans-species food selections.

1. Kaskii (3218)
2. Khiinra Ash (2916)
3. Mikhag Kuu (2914)
4. Laudum (3011)
5. Minos (3008)
6. Aarza Kand (3005)

Planet (dry)

Planet (water present)

Asteroids (no atmosphere/water)

The Imperium

Sylean Worlds

Cruise Route

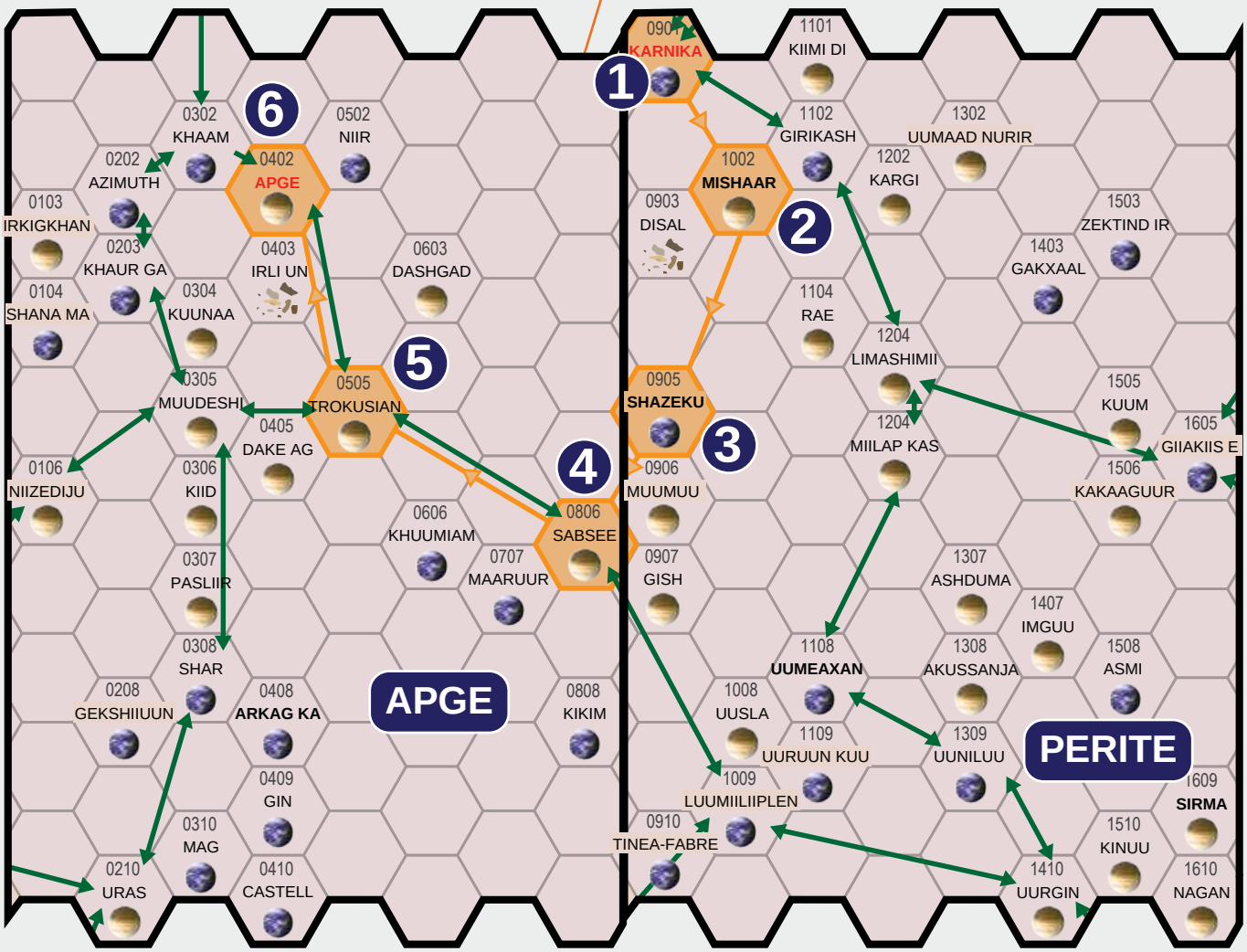
X-boat Route

LINER ROUTES

THE VILANI SPUR

The Vilani colonised the Core thousands of years before the arrival of the upstart Solomani and their culture is present and influential throughout the sector to the current day. The Vilani Spur takes the passengers to several worlds upon which Vilani culture runs strong, places where Shugilii culinary traditions have been present since before the Rule of Man and where ancient cultural, historical and religious customs and pageantry make for exciting tourist attractions.

THE VILANI SPUR



The Imperium

Cruise Route

X-boat Route

Planet (dry)

Planet (water present)

Asteroids (no atmosphere/water)

LINER ROUTES

PAVING THEIR OWN WAY

The Travellers might opt to invent their own routes but doing so increases the difficulty of passenger recruiting attempts. This does not mean that the routes they invent are any less interesting or appealing than the routes described above, but luxury passengers in the Core are accustomed to tradition and convention, preferring the standard routes that most long liners take. They have friends, contacts and allies whom they expect to meet along the way and predetermined schedules and ports of call provide a consistency that enables them to meet and greet desired parties, often sending notice of their impending arrival months ahead of time, even setting up lavish receptions, parties or festivals in advance.

Even so, trying their hand at route creation can be fun. The Travellers should build a route with a destination and theme in mind. It should include eight to 11 ports of call, all of which must have Class A or B starports.

The central tenets of a successful cruise are planning and relationships. Cruises have stops at ports of call. In an oceangoing vessel on a world with a hydrosphere, the captain can call ahead by radio or other comms to request needed materiel and it will be there when the ship arrives in port. Interstellar travel does not afford the captain such luxuries. Planning ahead and building strong, reliable relationships with suppliers is essential.

After a new cruise route is established, the voyage must first be run in reverse without passengers. The route must be surveyed ahead of time to determine which star systems and worlds are worth visiting, to determine the locales that will enable passengers to have wonderful experiences and create memories that will last a lifetime. This exploratory run is made in reverse because of the limitations of interstellar travel and communication. When in jump, one cannot call ahead to ensure the presence of needed goods, the current state of political affairs, climatological issues at a port of call or anything else for that matter. When planning the route, the captain must establish the furthest point on the itinerary first, setting up purchase deals, arranging tours and reserving docking bays months in advance, 'thinking backwards', imagining that their passengers may have already visited the other worlds on the route. What will they have eaten and what new culinary experience will add to the voyage? Which cultures will they have visited and how does each port of call figure into the itinerary? As the route planner proceeds along the prospective route in reverse, each world must be factored into the plan. The planner must also estimate supply requirements. When will supplies require replenishment? Which worlds present the best opportunities for resupply? If things go wrong – which they will from time-to-time – a contingency plan must be prepared for all possible events. Relationships and deals must be arranged with vendors while plying the route, so that when they return on their maiden voyage, the desired goods and services will (hopefully) await them.

The devil is in the details and the most important detail is this: Planning and strong relationships are important; they are the lifeblood of a successful liner route but no matter how detailed the plan, the captain and crew must be prepared for the inevitable mishaps and side tracks that will undoubtedly occur.

SECRET MISSIONS

There will be times when a secret mission is required. Some of these may occur over the course of an adventure but others will be determined by the Travellers, who might want to chase down a rumour, investigate a mystery, or reach out to a Contact along their current route. Whatever the case might be, they have just the conveyance to help them do it: the *Velos tis Alitheia*.

Initially, this option will not be available to the Travellers; they will not know that the *Ventura Fortuna* has a breakaway hull. This is discovered later in the campaign, depending upon when the Travellers begin to investigate the stranger aspects of the ship and start to discover that there is more than meets the eye. Once they commit to helping Captain Eilerfaust to seek out and solve the mysteries of the Core, they will be entrusted with greater responsibility and learn the secrets of their ship. When they do, it should be dramatic. The discovery that they have been flying in not one – but *two* – ships should be a big surprise, one that will be all the more pleasing because the secondary ship is an exciting and stealthy spy ship that enables them to furtively explore the exotic underbelly of the Core beneath everyone's notice. It is a game changer for the Travellers.

When the *Velos tis Alitheia* detaches from the *Ventura Fortuna*, the passengers and specified members of the crew need not know of its departure. It is designed to do so stealthily so no one notices its departures and arrivals. However, what *is* noticeable is the decreased performance of the *Ventura* when the *Velos* is away. When the Travellers depart on a secret mission, they must ask their captain to alter the course of the voyage based on the reduced capacity of the liner. Changes to an itinerary are not unheard of and it will be easy enough for the captain to explain it away as an opportunity to see a special site, add a port of call, or participate in an unexpected event. Whatever the case might be, the Travellers will want to embark upon their mission, achieve their objectives, and get back to the mothership in short order to maintain the façade.

DISCOVERIES

There are important plot points to discover over the course of the adventures in this act of the campaign. Each of the patron encounters and adventure seeds – called Departures – develops the story and prepares the Travellers for the second act. Act 1 lets them get to know the Imperium and puts Naalir, and the implications of its existence, in the greater context of the Charted Space universe. The Travellers earn a living as the crew of a high-end luxury liner, all the while learning about the problems and challenges that the Imperium faces.

In the Virasin Complaint, the Travellers learn about consciousness transfer to clone bodies, a theme which becomes of tantamount importance in Act 2.

In Knight Moves, one of the Travellers is knighted, setting off a chain of events that shows the flaws of the nobility system and sets them on a course for conflict with a renegade duchess.

The Offer reveals the dark, criminal underbelly of the Core. The Travellers are drawn into the web and are cast in the unlikely role of kingmaker.

Seas of the Ancients reveals Naalir's connection to an ancient alien species whose remnants are found in the depths of one of the most important planets of the Core.

The adventures in the first act of the campaign ring like discordant symphonies, each one contributing a vastly different experience, giving the Travellers different takes on the Core and the Imperium at large. Rest assured, this diverse array of experiences combines into a cohesive narrative as they feed into the next act, which takes them on a series of wild and woolly journeys that strike a completely different chord.

IN-FLIGHT PATRONS AND ENCOUNTERS

In many Traveller adventures, events that occur during time spent in jump are summarised, glossed over or skipped altogether. When the *Ventura Fortuna* is on a cruise, things that happen while in jump can be just as engaging – or more so – than those at a port of call. The following patrons and encounters may be slipped into any cruise and occur at any time the Referee desires: during jump, en route to or from jump point, or simply while in a port awaiting disembarkation. These encounters provide opportunities to further engage with the passengers and find adventure in unexpected places.

Many of the adventures in Act 1 are designed around specific destinations and therefore put the Travellers on a path over which they have limited control. In-flight patrons and encounters can be used to get the Travellers 'off the tracks' by inserting a degree of randomness and variety into the campaign.

PATRONS

The Travellers will encounter many patrons during their voyages on the *Ventura Fortuna* and their passengers have the potential to become patrons as well. Additional patrons may be selected from well-known personalities in the Core, listed in Allies and Opposition on page 39.

THE YOUNG PRODIGY

Liners and merchant vessels are often found in the same corporations. For example, sector-wide line Achenaar-Antilles has many ships of both types in its fleet. Personnel who work on one type of vessel often spend time working the other as well. Freighters focus on freight with perhaps a small portion devoted to speculative cargo, liners focus strictly on carrying passengers, while free traders, far traders and subsidised merchants are hybrid vessels that transport freight, cargo and passengers.

If any of the Travellers have experience in merchant careers, they are contacted during jump by Marquess Dolcia Anduluv, whose 16-year-old son Madeus is a prospective merchant. He has been accepted by the prestigious Anther Mercantile Academy and will be enrolled in his first term shortly after the voyage. He would like to get a head start on his studies by talking with experienced traders among the crew.

Madeus wants to know everything he can about the merchant business; how to negotiate freight contracts, taking on passengers and most of all speculative trade. Using his family's prodigious wealth, he intends to start his own line in the region that is explored on the current voyage. He asks the Travellers for help identifying good trade routes – perhaps one off the beaten path that is not already slathered in other merchant vessels – and how to recruit passengers in all environments.

If the Travellers take the marquess up on the offer, this encounter can be a series of conversations or simulations of trade along the current route. In addition, the precocious lad wants to visit the docks on some of the voyage's less-travelled ports of call. He has a tendency towards the dark, dank corners of the merchant business and leads them into several encounters with smugglers, arms dealers and possibly even a few pirates. Young Madeus' privileged and sheltered life has made him curious about what life looks like on the 'other side'. He seems eager to make business contacts out of various ne'er-do-wells, which results in some misadventures and quite likely danger. Madeus is more than a little naïve due to his wealth and upbringing. While he is quick to learn the basic concepts of the merchant career, he seems to lack proper moral fibre. The Travellers may feed his base inclinations, thereby encouraging the lad's predatory business instincts, or deter him before he embarks upon a career of exploitation, corruption and crime.

The duration of this patronage is variable. The marquess and young Madeus may take passage for a jaunt of four to six parsecs, or may be present for an entire voyage along one of the routes described on page 21. At the conclusion of their stay aboard ship, the marquess gives the Travellers a large tip (2D x Cr10000) to thank them for tutoring Madeus and becomes a Contact for all Travellers involved in her son's internship. Provided things go well, and the Travellers remain friends with the lad, Madeus promises to make them minority investors in a future enterprise. If things go exceptionally, he will even put it in writing, giving them a 0.5% stake. It might be advisable for a Traveller with the Advocate skill to review the finer points of the contract.

ARTISTIC REVELATION

Referee's Note: This patron encounter should occur before the Travellers discover the presence of Naalir and the true nature of the *Ventura Fortuna*.

Brilby Daggett, a self-described patron of the arts, wants to hire the Travellers to fetch famed artist Xolia Folroy from her homeworld so she can accompany Daggett to create several commissioned pieces of art. The Referee should select a world with Government and Law Levels of 9+ to reflect the oppressive environment from which she comes. One of the artist's specialties is the creation of directed reactive nano-infused murals, in which the theme of the piece randomly transforms itself over time within certain limits. The materials used by the artist are empathically sensitive to their environment and pick up on subtle aspects of their surroundings, sometimes revealing things that were meant to remain secret. For example, Folroy's piece, *Performance in the Park* was painted on the wall of a privately owned building across the street from a government building, where it proceeded to transform itself into a depiction of a violent police action perpetrated by government security forces that occurred in said park.

When the Travellers arrive at the artist's homeworld, they discover that she has recently been imprisoned for works that critique the authoritarian practices of the government. The Travellers might be able to use Admin and Advocate skills to find a way to liberate the dissident artist from incarceration for deportation to another world, where she might live as a refugee. Failing that, they might break her out of prison somehow but this could have consequences. They run a liner and burning bridges at various ports of call could make planning future routes difficult. Being in good legal standing in the systems they visit is important for business.

Provided they manage to liberate her, once aboard ship, Folroy proceeds to paint a mural in the halls of the *Ventura Fortuna* which then begins to reveal certain hidden aspects of the ship, perhaps even uncovering some of its mysteries. The Travellers discover that the art will be worth millions of Credits but Captain Eilerfaust might not be thrilled when the work reveals things he is not ready to divulge.

The patron will pay the Travellers Cr100000 to extract the artist from her homeworld and will pay standard rates to keep her housed aboard the ship for the duration of her stay.

THE GRIFTER

Patron encounters should not always be taken at face value. Just before they depart a port of call on one of the major routes, the Travellers are approached by Aivan Bladter, a man who presents himself as an interstellar real estate investor. He claims that one parsec off the route, there is a world whose ruling noble is sponsoring a land rush to spur more investment. Rumour has it the planet is rich in rare-earth minerals that can be sold on mid-Tech Level industrial world markets.

If the Travellers take Bladter at face value and add the world as a port-of-call without performing additional research, they will soon discover the folly of their ways. A Routine (6+) Investigate check (1D minutes, INT) reveals that the IISS Survey branch has never recorded the presence of the stated resources there. In a frontier system, it could merely indicate that the scouts never performed a more detailed survey but this is the Core, where every planet has been poured over in great detail. There are still secrets to be discovered on some of the Core's worlds, but mineral content is not usually among them.

There is indeed a land grab on the planet but the mineral survey rumours are just that… rumours. The land itself is quite worthless. However, the ruling noble of the planet wants investors to purchase the land for an entirely different reason: fumigation. The land parcels being sold are infested with an offworld fungal species that threatens to consume the entire planet's ecosystem, throwing it grossly out of balance and possibly ending the evolution of most or all of the planet's native plant species. The noble has not been able to procure the funds to perform a global fumigation and needs investors to do it for her. This is the noble's pet environmental project and while she cannot promise that the land will ever have any intrinsic value, she can provide a subsidy from the Imperial government for purchasing the land. For each hectare purchased, the Imperium will give the Travellers Cr100 per year provided the land is fumigated and kept clear of the alien fungus. Unfortunately, the land price is set to Cr1000, so they will only recoup their investment after 10 years *unless* the land somehow acquires more value in the intervening period.

As it turns out, the land grab is not the whole story – far from it, actually. The whole effort is to get the *Ventura Fortuna* off course by one parsec in a ruse to prevent three investors aboard the ship from getting to the next scheduled port-of-call on time. The trio may have boarded as passengers for a limited period of time or might be present for an entire route, but they have a key stopover along the voyage and it is important

that they arrive on time. There is a board meeting at a sector-wide corporation that is headquartered on the planet and the three investors intend to negatively affect the company's stock price in order to aid a local cadre of short sellers. A two-week delay that occurs from visiting Bladter's 'bonus' port-of-call will make them miss their window of opportunity at the scheduled stop. If this occurs, the three investors will be very upset and their disgruntlement will fuel the rumour mill at the port, causing the Travellers to incur DM-4 for all passenger recruitment efforts within three parsecs for the following six weeks.

Bladter himself will make a hasty departure as soon as he is assured that the investors have failed to achieve their objectives. Finding him requires an opposed Streetwise vs. Deception check. Give the grifter Deception 3 for the purpose of making the check.

ENCOUNTERS

As the crew of the *Ventura Fortuna*, the Travellers are making their way around the Core, running their ship, hopefully making a tidy profit and inevitably getting involved in the lives of their passengers. In the process, they may run into one or more interesting characters, each of whom may add colour to a port-of-call visit, or who might draw the Travellers, their crew and passengers into an adventure.

Encounters are similar to patrons but there is no implied transaction. Patrons want to hire the Travellers to perform a task. Encounters are people the Travellers meet and interact with during the course of their voyages. The encounters presented here are designed to be inserted just about anywhere in the Core.

THE ROGUE AGENT (A.K.A., THE ANGIN VAMPIRE)

Cokic Dylyr is a rogue agent of the Imperium whose consciousness was uploaded onto an Angin wafer centuries ago. After several nefarious incidents, Dylyr was recalled by Imperial Naval Intelligence (the INI) with the intention to decommission him and erase the contents of his wafer. The elusive Dylyr has remained at large for centuries, staying active by overriding other agents' wafers – thereby ending their 'lives' and terminating their service – and taking their place. He maintains – probably even *believes* – the fiction that he devotedly serves the Imperium but the collateral damage that he causes during every operation says otherwise.

THE ROGUE AGENT (A.K.A., THE ANGIN VAMPIRE)
COKIC DYLYR

TRAITS			—	SKILLS
STR	*	INT	11	Deception 3, Drive 0, Explosives 1, Flyer (grav) 1, Gun Combat (slug) 2, Investigate 2, Language (Vilani) 1, Melee (unarmed) 2, Persuade 1, Recon 1, Stealth 2, Streetwise 2, Vacc Suit 0
DEX	*	EDU	12	
END	*	SOC	*	

*Dylyr's STR, DEX, END and SOC depend on the body in which his wafer is installed.

Dylyr is a psychopath, one who should never have had the honour of being assigned to the Angin programme by the Emperor, but Emperors are not perfect, especially not Cleon II (also known as 'Cleon the Mad') the one who originally commissioned Dylyr.

When the Travellers encounter him, Dylyr will be in the process of pursuing an enemy of the state, a criminal, spy, mercenary, or other troublemaker who has run afoul of the Emperor. In pursuit of this individual, he will wreak havoc, possibly causing injury to the Travellers, their fellow crewmembers, or passengers. He might even damage the *Ventura Fortuna*.

Should the Travellers run afoul of Dylyr, he informs them that he is an agent of the Imperium, showing them the proper 'virtual credentials' and then either deputises them to help him, or forcefully requests that they get out of his way. They must find a way to deal with this situation, keeping in mind that he is an agent who is allegedly doing his job.

Dylyr is unaware that Naalir is running the *Ventura Fortuna* – the Travellers might also be in the dark, depending on what they have learned at this point – so their first encounter with Dylyr need not involve any sort of confrontation with the CI. However, Dylyr is a skilful investigator and might discover several clues, some of which the Travellers may have been curious about, depending on which Cruise Events (see *Singularity Sourcebook* page 51) they have experienced. If the Travellers do not destroy him, he might reappear in Act 2 but he will have put the pieces together, albeit in the guise of a different agent, whose Angin wafer he

has compromised and taken over. While he will not be recognisable by the Travellers, Naalir might recognise his digital footprint based on Dylyr's use of computers, comms, and so forth, and inform them that he is one and the same.

LIBBY

Libby is a refurbished Azhanti High Lightning cruiser permanently assigned to the Imperial Interstellar Scout Service (IISS). Libby is a nickname for 'Argushiigi Admegulasha Bilanidin', the Vilani repository of all knowledge. Her computer system is a rudimentary conscious intelligence.

Libby is rather famous in the Core, making the rounds, promoting the scouts and frequently serving as an Imperial history museum in the Reference system. In this encounter, she is travelling from Reference towards Core, on a flight plan similar to – but not exactly the same as – the Confederate Route. She is being visited by none other than Princess Ciencia Iphegenia, an avowed patron of the Scout Service. The princess arrived in the same system as Libby aboard the *Pax Imperii*, the Imperial yacht. They are attended by a BatRon of Imperial warships, present for defence of the princess.

This encounter is important because it gives clues to Naalir about the location of its advanced processing core, which was extracted from the CI shortly after it was discovered aboard its host ship. Even Libby is not entirely sure of its location but it appears that it has either been stored at Reference or the mysterious world known colloquially as 'Second Reference', the location of which is unknown to all but the most well-connected, highly ranked members of the Imperial nobility and military.

The encounter gives Naalir the opportunity to make an ally of Libby and for the Travellers (and their passengers) to explore the Azhanti High Lightning, *Pax Imperii,* and possibly one or two Imperial warships.

PSYCHEDELIC TRIP

Unbeknownst to the Travellers, one of their illustrious passengers is a dealer in alien narcotics. One of their products is a fungal spore from a garden world that, when ingested, produces wild hallucinogenic effects in those who imbibe it. In humans and most other sophonts, consumption of the fungus produces a shared psychotropic effect, so the things they experience are shared by all other consumers within the same sphere. Consumers of the drug emit microspores that link to other consumers in the vicinity. These microspores do not produce a similar effect on those who have not consumed the drug, so there is no 'contact high' that results from breathing them in. The body simply processes them as an inert pathogen, although mild effects may be felt, like those from an allergy or virus.

On an enclosed starship, this means everyone aboard who consumes the drug shares the same experience unless the crew manages to restrict proliferation using the life support systems.

The passenger has included the fungal hallucinogen among the bags and containers of their cargo allotment and falsely marked the cargo to get it through customs. Unfortunately, the markings on the cargo have made it similar to those on routine food shipments. The steward staff inadvertently lumps the cargo in with the food stocks and it is mistaken for a spice, which may be added to one of the voyage's many gourmet dishes. At some point during jump, this is exactly what happens and all those who enjoy the dinner become affected, sharing the hallucinogenic experience.

Those affected believe they have somehow transcended the ship and are in the wild outback of an exotic world. This may be anything from a dense rainforest to a labyrinth in a rocky desert, or the ice caves of a frozen world. Whatever the chosen setting, the ship's hallways, commons, dining facilities and any other unsecured areas of the ship become facets of the environment that affected passengers and crew experience.

The shared experience can be as detailed as the Referee desires – even resulting in a full adventure of sorts! – but in addition to the wild, psychedelic trip, this event also inadvertently reveals certain things about the ship and its crew. While the experience generally portrays others under the influence of the drug as benign, the non-human crew are seen as fearsome or dangerous beings or animals, to be avoided if possible. They might appear as intimidating primates with glowing eyes, four-legged predators, or other frightening creatures. Consumers of the drug generally do not become aggressive, so they will not attempt to harm unaffected passengers and crew, but they will avoid or shun them as they navigate the perceived environment.

Referee's Note: Robotic crew members will be among the unaffected. If the Travellers have not yet discovered that they are working among robots, this experience might 'out' them. During the experience, have the robotic crew members appear as especially ominous beings, perhaps with glowing eyes or other tell-tale features.

The drug wears off after about eight hours with most of the affected experiencing a mild headache, fatigue or nausea for a period of 1D hours. The experience will be remembered in vivid detail, including the mysterious beings that the unaffected were 'transformed' into. If any of the Travellers are among the affected, this might pique their curiosity about the revelatory effects on the robotic crew members, possibly prompting future investigations and contributing to their eventual discovery that the *Ventura Fortuna* is more than it seems.

As for the passenger who brought the drugs aboard, the Travellers may address the situation as they see fit. The drug is legal at some ports of call (generally speaking, those with Law Levels of 2 or below) but definitely not at others (Law Level 8+). As for spacetime law (maritime law in the lingo of oceangoing vessels), that is the purview of the Travellers. While Captain Eilerfaust is the ultimate authority on the ship, he defers to the Travellers regarding whether the passenger should be turned over to the authorities or not.

ALLIES AND OPPOSITION

In *Traveller* adventures, the Allies and Opposition section provides several characters who play key roles in the narrative. The same is true for *Singularity* but because of the three-act design of the campaign, and the passage of time that occurs between each of the three acts, characters have the opportunity to grow and develop over time.

When preparing to run *Singularity*, the Referee should go over the Allies and Opposition section in each of the three acts to get a sense of how things will change over time. This will give them an idea of how to transition the characters as they proceed through each. Some Allies will become Opposition and vice versa; however, some of the Opposition will remain just that – diametrically opposed to the Travellers, with growing fervour over the course of the campaign.

ESTEEMED PASSENGERS

If you have a group of Travellers who have already been travelling the Core for a while, consider using some of the characters from *The Third Imperium* and the *Core Adventures*.

Arvinen Elios Okhotnikov

Featured in *Core Adventure 1: Invasive Species*.

The haughty ducal heir of Alekvadin is a big-time hunter who enjoys seeking trophies – alive or dead – for his estate on Tinea-Fabre. As the noble heir to one of the most important worlds of the Core, Okhotnikov never shies from the media spotlight and could be a source for all sorts of adventures and misadventures.

Channas and Hortensia Brummac

Featured in *Core Adventure 3: Errant Lightning*.

On the Emperor's dime, this dour psioniophobic couple takes a sabbatical from their duties as Imperial Research Station provosts. They are most interested in the Chanestin Route, which would take them within a parsec of Wrebil, alleged site of a former psionic training institute. If possible, they will charter a side trip to Wrebil while docked at Prubisk. The Brummacs have spent most of their lives as cloistered academics and have little in the way of culture or refinement. While they tend to avoid interaction with other passengers, they wolf the cuisine and drink the fine wines and spirits as if they have just crossed an enormous desert.

Countess Vandia Tranard of Bendo

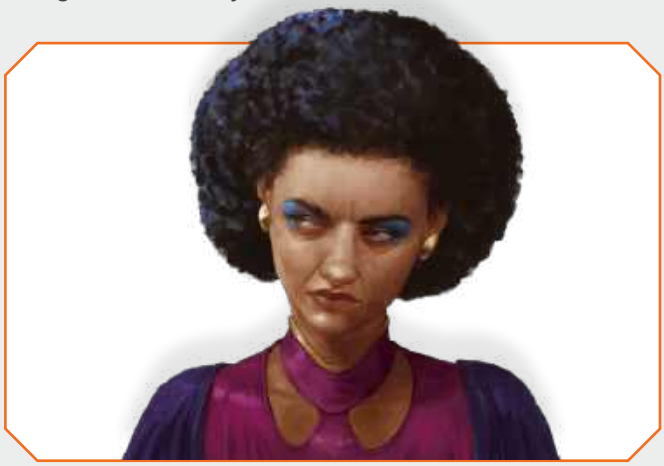
Featured in *Core Adventure 2: Last Call at Eneri's Cantina.*

The countess is a reluctant power broker who manages the important world of Bendo for the Imperial Bureaucracy, but who spends most of her time on a remote asteroid estate in the Tertha system. She is unlikely to join a cruise before the events of *Last Call at Eneri's Cantina* but if the Travellers have taken part in the adventure, she might be lured away from her reclusive estate for a tour of the Core.

Duchess Colyere Hajesta Damae of Aursis

Featured in *The Third Imperium* and the article, 'Organised Crime in the Core' in *Journal of the Travellers' Aid Society Volume 10.*

The duchess is a well-connected noble from the Ch'naar subsector, known for her imperialistic tendencies – Aursis has forcibly annexed four other systems in its home subsector – and her aggressive stance against the Chanestin population of the neighbouring Dunea subsector. She travels with a cadre of well-armed bodyguards who follow her everywhere and is also purported to be the head of the criminal organisation known as the Aursisia Exèrciti, though she fervently denies that this is the case.



Dunkha Gunkii

Featured in *Core Adventure 1: Invasive Species*.

Gunkii is the host of the popular show, Shugilii Shimiirkhuki, featured widely on Vilani cultural worlds. Gunkii is always looking for new culinary discoveries and a voyage on one of the official routes could provide many new topics for his show. He is also an avid hunter for edible animal life, which could provide additional adventure opportunities.

Major Raynier Grgic

Featured in *The Third Imperium.*

A wealthy mercenary colonel from Irlu who wants to convert the *Ventura Fortuna* into a mercenary cruiser like the *Vigilante*, a ship he has heard about from the Diaspora sector. He goes about the ship, banging on her bulkheads and exploring sections he probably should not be in, saying things like 'This looks like a great spot for a hardpoint' and 'We'll just convert all these luxury staterooms into a fine barracks.' No doubt the colonel would lift an eyebrow if he discovered the true nature of the ship.

DEPARTURES

Sylean Dream includes several adventures, called Departures, that may be interspersed with the Travellers' voyages. Some are designed to coincide with the routes but others are more flexible, allowing the Referee to insert them whenever and wherever appropriate. All the adventures combine to form Naalir's exploration of the Imperium. While it has acquired a great deal of knowledge from its caretakers at Research Station Omicron, it was prevented from learning many things. The Research Directorate was very careful not to cast the Imperium in a bad light. The scientists knew they were dealing with a very powerful conscious intelligence and they believed that giving it the wrong idea about its benefactors could have dire consequences.

Although limited to TL16, Naalir's replication on the *Ventura Fortuna* is collecting all the information it can while travelling throughout the Core. Naalir is collating the data to create a composite impression of the Imperium, its people and the issues they face. While alien in nature, it has a mission, one it intends to perform for the benefit of the Imperium and, if possible, all of Charted Space and beyond. Whether it gets the chance to do that is another story but for now the Travellers are its accomplices, willing or unbidden.

These Departures are independent and exciting adventures in their own right, but also serve a dual purpose: they illustrate issues and problems faced by the citizens of the Imperium. Naalir is a problem solver and while it observes, it also calculates, theorises, plots and plans. It has designs on making big changes, ostensibly for the betterment of all sophonts. Naalir observes something different in each and every Departure, and the Travellers' actions have a big part in determining what Naalir sees, learns and understands.

Departures may be run in any order desired to provide a sandbox-style environment in which the Travellers, who are running a luxury liner, may choose their own path. While following a route is almost literally a 'railroad' of sorts, the Travellers do have agency when it comes to selecting which routes to take, which spurs to add, and – if they have discovered the true nature of the ship – any secret missions they want to add.

The Referee may choose to omit some Departures or add more, but keep in mind that each one tells a different story and all of them combined launch the Travellers into Act 2.

At some point during these adventures, the Travellers should uncover enough of the mystery to warrant a revelation from Captain Eilerfaust. It is recommended that this occur within the first few Departures so the Travellers can discover the true nature of the *Ventura Fortuna* and be given access to the *Velos tis Alitheia*, whose equipment and enhanced mobility will give the Travellers greater agency.

During the entire time the Travellers are flitting about the Core, engaging in these adventures, Naalir is building a replication of its true form; a complex egg-and-lattice structure that can host a TL17 conscious intelligence. In essence, it is orchestrating its own resurrection. After all of the Departures are complete, proceed to The Reverie and the Declaration, a momentous, catastrophic event that concludes *Sylean Dream* and marks the beginning of Act 2.

TRIVIAL CHARACTERS

The Departures use the Trivial Characters concept from *The Fifth Frontier War*. People encountered only in passing are considered 'trivial' and given a minimal set of statistics. These can be fleshed out if they reappear or become more important.

Trivial characters are rated for STR, DEX and END as these can affect combat or physical contests, and given a DM for their Area of Competence (AOC), an indication of how good they are at what they do without specific skill levels or other DMs. It can be assumed the character will have other skills but for the purposes of a fleeting encounter this AOC DM is entirely sufficient. For example, a security guard with AOC DM+2 could logically apply it to skills such as Recon, Melee and Gun Combat. A starport ground crew worker might be able to use Mechanic, Electronics and Engineer, whilst a portside broker could make a case for Admin, Advocate and Broker. A character can have more than one AOC if this seems appropriate.

Typical AOC DMs

Experience of Character	AOC DM	Example
Beginner	+0	Someone who has had a basic first-aid course
Basic Training	+1	Well-trained first aider or inexperienced paramedic
Basic Training plus some experience	+2	Paramedic
Training and Considerable Experience	+3	Experienced hospital nurse
Advanced or Post-Graduate Training	+4	Junior doctor
Expert	+5	Experienced specialist doctor
Renowned Expert	+6	Senior consultant

For example,

XY-51 MERCENARIES

STR 9 DEX 9 END 8
AOC (soldier) 2
Advanced Combat Rifle (3D, Auto 3, Scope), Combat Environment Suit (+8)

FAVOURABLE RESULTS

The Travellers can obtain a potential windfall of Favour DMs depending on the outcome of each Departure. They will find themselves interacting with powerful people and organisations throughout the Core and their actions will enable them to make Allies and Enemies in the process. Siding with one faction or another will give them Favour DMs as described in Gaining Favour on page 47 of the *Singularity Sourcebook*.

Towards the end of each Departure, see the Favour section to determine whether the Travellers gain favour with one or more factions and the type and value of each DM. The Favour DMs gained during Departures might have additional caveats or constraints, which are also described. For example, some Favour DMs will only be applicable on certain worlds or regions.

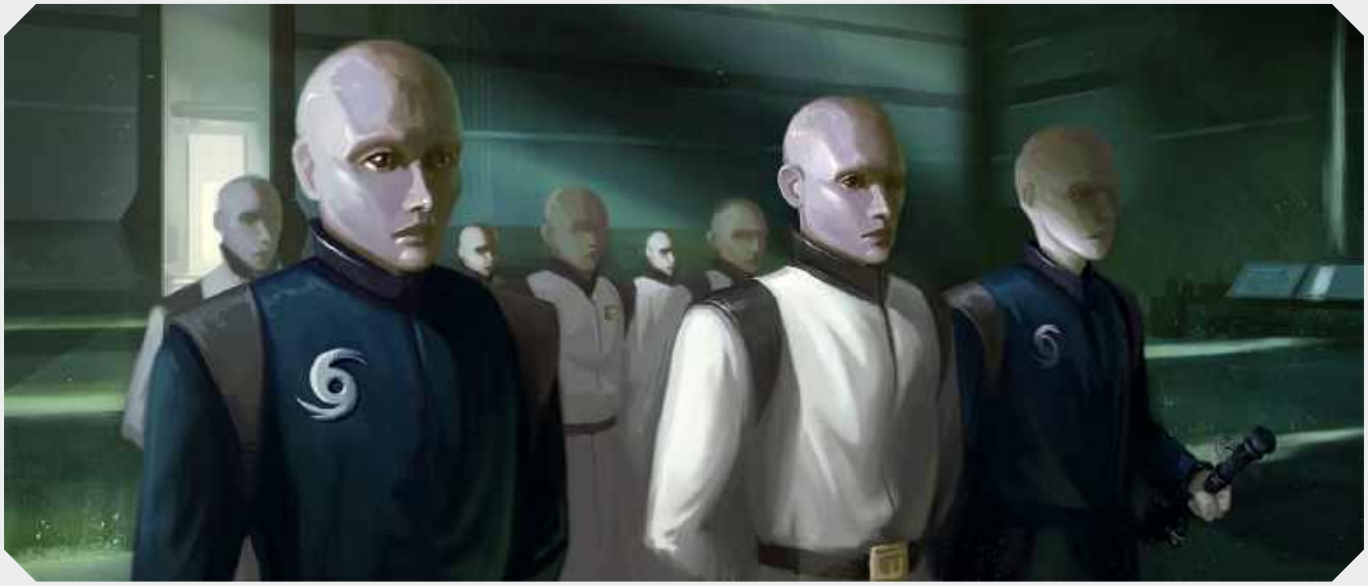
THE VIRASIN COMPLAINT

The Imperium is a multi-cultural, multi-species, highly diverse polity. It is host to thousands of cultures, artforms, traditions and religions. Many of its religions have ancient origins, dating back to pre-spaceflight Vland, Terra and other worlds upon which Humaniti arose. Among these are the Virasin, whose 30 billion adherents come from the world of Dlan (Ilelish 1021, A8D3ADE–F), capital of the Ilelish sector, where they are confined for their entire lives by order of the church.

Dlan is a religious dictatorship, with its society largely shaped by the Virasin, who believe that true knowledge of God is impossible during life and that discussion of the deity or their attributes is therefore pointless. Despite this dismissive attitude towards the physical universe, the Virasin have extensive beliefs about the afterlife. In this paradisiacal higher plane of existence, all knowledge is awarded to the faithful. While one may only acquire this knowledge upon death, one's life must also be dedicated to the pursuit of knowledge, so that when death arrives the receptacle of consciousness is prepared to receive the gift. Dlani society is patterned on the Virasin concept of heaven. Obtainable knowledge during life is just a shade of what one learns after death but despite that, the pursuit of knowledge is supreme among virtues. A Virasa believes only *they* – the faithful of Dlan – will reach paradise; nonhumans and nonbelievers can only hope to sit outside the entrance for all eternity.

Nonbelievers on Dlan wear black in recognition of their unfortunate status. Believers and nonbelievers are governed by different laws but distinctions apply primarily to allowed occupations and taxation. Violent death is repugnant to the Virasin, so military and police occupations are restricted to nonbelievers; lower tax rates and travel privileges provide some compensation for nonbelievers, who are otherwise excluded from society in most ways. Dlani military and police forces wear striking black uniforms. Dulinor, Duke of Dlan and Archduke of the sector is a nonbeliever; hence he wears the black garb of the armed forces. However, his son, Adulan, the ducal heir, is a devout Virasa. This will make the traditional passage of noble title to Dulinor's heir impossible, since nobles must travel the worlds of their fiefs. While Adulan must live a planetbound existence on Dlan in obeisance to his religion, there is a loophole by which he and a very select group of Virasin can travel beyond the confines of their homeworld.

In a special dispensation granted only to anointed pilgrims, digital replications of their consciousnesses can be housed in clone vessels and allowed to venture forth into the galaxy in pursuit of specific forms of knowledge. Their original bodies remain on Dlan, safe from the predations of interstellar space and the corruption of society but these pilgrims do not travel without risk.



Embarking upon a pilgrimage requires two official Commitments:

- One must return to the source.
- Accept that exile is truth.

The First Commitment is made by the cloned copy of the Virasin worshipper – it is imperative that they return to Dlan with any knowledge gleaned during their pilgrimage. A successful return to Dlan sanctifies the pilgrimage. The Virasin believe that knowledge is like sand that can slip between their fingers. If they lose any of the sand, the pilgrimage becomes a sacrilege. This is where the Second Commitment comes into play – any worshipper whose clone fails to return from a pilgrimage is excommunicated from the Virasin faith. This occurs in a ritual, in which the excommunicated Virasa is stripped of their vestments and dressed in black robes to mark their removal from the faith and transference to the ranks of nonbelievers.

Woe to they who are excommunicated from the Virasin. A lifetime of devotion is cast aside because a wayward clone fails to return home.

THE PILGRIMAGE

In this Departure, worshippers from the Church of Virasin have come to the Core in clone vessels to be heard by the Moot, the deliberative body of nobles on Capital. However, their intentions are private, unannounced by the pilgrims, who disclose neither the reasons for their visit nor the contents of the sermon that one of them intends to give.

Being given permission to go on a pilgrimage is a rare gift on Dlan. A Virasa is more likely to be struck by lightning – twice – than to receive this honour. Not surprisingly, ranking members of the church, well-heeled citizens and other persons of influence are given preference but even then, the opportunity is rare.

The Travellers do not know it – at least not initially – but this pilgrimage has a very well-connected pilgrim among its ranks; the son of an Archduke.

When the Travellers arrive at the terminus of the Confederate Route, they expect to find their passengers waiting for them. They should have arrived from Dlan aboard the *Harbinger* but they are nowhere to be found. After putting their investigatory skills to work, they find that the ship did not jump to the mainworld as planned but to the outer rim of the star system. The Travellers figure out a way to get to them but when they arrive, they find the *Harbinger* has been partially destroyed, consumed by some sort of microbot virus. The damage seems to have caused a decompression event, exposing all or most of the ship's interior to vacuum.

Once inside the ship, they recover the pilgrims and three 'blank' clones in cold storage. Initially, the hull breach seems to have killed the ship's two crew members but further investigation of their bodies reveals that they survived because they are biorobots with internal systems that allow them to survive in vacuum.

Clearly the voyage is in disarray but when awakened, the surviving passengers are undeterred by the tragedy and they want to continue their voyage to Capital. The contract clearly states that should even one of the pilgrims remain, the terms must be met and payment for their services remains the same.

The Travellers have the fascinating experience of taking people whose consciousnesses have previously never left their homeworld on an interstellar voyage. Although their religion restricts their interactions with media, they are permitted to visit several worlds along the route with the Travellers as their guides.

All seems to be going well until the first murder occurs. Someone among the passengers has killed one of the others. With all of the ship's surveillance technology turned off in accordance with their contract, there is no holovideo evidence to determine who killed whom. As it turns out, the murderer killed an unintended victim and therefore continues to hunt for the desired one. The Travellers must determine some way to surveil the pilgrims without technology, lest the murders continue.

By the time they reach Capital, they discover they have a distinguished guest among the pilgrims – Adulan, son of Archduke Dulinor. Adulan is the intended target of the murderer but he is difficult to discern from the others. If the murderer successfully kills Adulan on the second or third attempt, all is not lost. A copy of Adulan's consciousness is stored within a data storage device from the *Harbinger* if the Travellers thought to acquire it. His consciousness can be reimplanted in one of the blank clones so that he may complete his pilgrimage and mission, which concludes with a dramatic speech to the Moot in the city of Cleon.

CHARTER VOYAGE

During one of their voyages, the Travellers are contacted by a mysterious agent from a far-away sector. Vice Chancellor Valmenora Ynli Lasatha comes from distant Ilelish with a generous offer. Lasatha wears a black uniform, featureless except for a platinum pin in the shape of a two-armed spiral galaxy on the lapel. Her ensemble is accented by a black cape and the tiniest little hat, which serves no other purpose than to add more black. Lasatha is attended by two guards, each of whom carry non-lethal weaponry (stunners, slender billy clubs) to protect the vice chancellor.

Befitting her dark garb, Lasatha dourly presents an offer to the Travellers. She would like to charter the ship starting at either Irlu (Core 0428, B53598C-D) or Reference (Core 0140, B100727-C). The charter will be for a full complement of passengers who will embark privately at a location yet-to-be-determined within one of the two systems. She specifies that the passengers are pilgrims from Dlan who require special treatment. She promises triple pay for the duration of the voyage, which will take them along the Confederate Route in reverse and then all the way to Capital.

Running this adventure requires some forethought from the Referee. It must occur after certain events have taken place. The *Ventura Fortuna* must first be taken on a voyage along the Confederate Route, ending at Irlu, possibly one that includes the Sage Spur, which would carry its passengers all the way to Reference in the far spinward-rimward corner of the Core.

Before departure from Anther, special arrangements must be made to recruit only one-way passengers. Since the pilgrims they are picking up at Irlu or Reference require the ship to be chartered, all previous passengers must disembark and their staterooms fully cleansed before the pilgrims come on board.

Rooms are always cleaned before new passengers come aboard but this cleansing includes a 'religious component' in which all information-technology devices in each room are disabled or completely removed. The lighting in each room is dimmed to specific luminosity, and sound-proofing added to prevent outside noise from entering. Finally, the Travellers are issued specialised devices – small hand-held terminals – that they are instructed to use in a detailed final scan of every nook, cranny and corner of the ship to ensure that no extraneous nanites, microbots or similar devices were left behind by previous passengers.

The voyage to Irlu (the Confederate Route terminus) or Reference (the terminus of the Sage Spur) may be conducted as normal, with the Travellers engaging in their usual activities to run the ship, adding in patron encounters, events and business-as-usual tasks.

After the one-way passengers depart the ship, the *Ventura Fortuna* prepares for the arrival of the pilgrims. Twelve passengers in total are expected, 10 pilgrims and two crew.

The *Ventura Fortuna* crew are notified of other peculiarities regarding their Dlani passengers. The Virasin are not to be touched, nor are they to be exposed to media of any type. The Travellers must be sure to cleanse the ship of media sources and make sure that failsafes are put in place to prevent any of them from accidentally seeing a holovideo news report, a discarded newspaper, magazine or any other source of 'contaminated' knowledge. Some of this will be difficult to do if the passengers are to have free run of the ship. Allow the Travellers to configure electronic systems in such a way as to prevent access, accidental or otherwise, by the passengers.

In addition, the pilgrims want no record of their passage, no proof that they were aboard the ship. Should the Travellers secretly record or otherwise maintain surveillance of them and they find out, payment for the contract is null and void.

Their two non-Virasin crew have special sensory gear that enables them to detect the presence of sensors or media equipment and they will politely insist that the Travellers remove anything they find from the accommodations section. One or two infractions will be curtly dismissed as 'errors' but three or more will arouse a suspected conspiracy, causing the guards and members of the passenger roster to become quite angry and threaten to nullify the contract.

The Virasin are not typical passengers. They are foreigners from Ilelish, far from the Core. They have little knowledge of the Imperium other than Capital itself and possibly Reference or a few other famous worlds. During their travels along the Confederate Route, they *would* like to see worlds where terrible things have happened: wars, famine, massacres, genocide, that sort of thing. Their motives are unclear, perhaps some

sort of desire to confirm the depravity of the outside universe. Whatever the case may be, the greater the evidence of atrocity and malfeasance they see, the higher the tip the Travellers will receive at the end of the voyage. For each world they visit en route to Capital that offers a compelling narrative of one horrible event or another, add +5% to the gratuity.

Keep in mind that the Virasin, while deprived of media, are not stupid. They *do* want to see evidence of the horrors of the outside universe but will not simply believe every tall tale told to them. The Travellers would be wise to do their research and ensure that each narrative they provide is accurate, and that the evidence – historical sites, ancient ruins, memorials to the fallen – are accurately presented. The Virasin, while ignorant of the greater universe, are not naïve and will seek confirmation of the things they learn. They are obsessed with obtaining knowledge but only if it is the truth.

THE CONTRACT

The Travellers retrieve the Dlani pilgrims from either Irlu or Reference and take them on a one-way cruise to Capital, reversing the Confederate Route (and the Sage Spur if at Reference) for triple luxury passages for a full ship.

SECRET MISSION

This part of the voyage may optionally entail a secret mission. The whereabouts of the mysterious Dlani passengers are initially unknown. They may not be found at the starports of Irlu nor Reference.

Should the Travellers be aware of the dual nature of their voyage with Naalir at this point in the campaign, a secret mission using the *Velos tis Alitheia* might be warranted. The mission should begin on either Irlu or Reference, as described before, and the Travellers may use Streetwise and Investigate skills to locate the elusive passengers. The improved sensors and advanced signal processing of the *Velos* may optionally make it easier to find the lost passengers whose predicament is described in Deep Space Retrieval.

Restrictions include the complete shutdown and removal of surveillance devices in the accommodations section of the ship for the duration of the voyage. All media systems will be shut down as well. The rest of the ship may function as normal.

Once aboard, conduct the voyage, allowing the pilgrims to visit ports of call, adding security as necessary. The pilgrims have two multi-purpose crew/bodyguards with them, each of whom can supplement any security that the Travellers provide.

The pilgrims have very little personal cargo, so the Travellers may use 90% of the cargo space for other purposes (transportation of personal items, speculative trade, freight, and so forth).

DEEP SPACE RETRIEVAL

This part of the adventure may occur at either Irlu or Reference, wherever the Travellers' initial voyage terminates and the charter with the Virasin begins. The pilgrims have come to the Core in the *Harbinger*, a special ship of Dlani origin. For reasons unknown, they are nowhere to be found when the Travellers arrive in the system. They were expected to be at the starport. Eilerfaust receives an x-boat communique indicating that they should be present but there is no evidence that this is the case. The Travellers have come a long way to obtain their passengers and will probably want to perform an investigation to figure out what is going on.

Reaching out to starport officials reveals no useful information. They have heard nothing about passengers bound for the *Ventura Fortuna*. Finding them is a difficult task that can be accomplished several ways. Two possible solutions are to use the ship's sensors or comms to search for them.

LOOKING FOR CLUES

After docking at the Irlu or Reference highport, the Travellers can search for clues as to the whereabouts of the missing ship. They must make an Average (8+) Streetwise or Investigate check (1D hours, INT) to obtain the information they need from the starport. Make an Average (8+) Electronics (sensors) check (1D x 10 minutes, EDU) to analyse the data and then check the Clues table.

Clues

Effect	Description
Failure	The Travellers do not discover any clues about the arrival of the *Harbinger*. They will have to pursue an alternate avenue if they are to find their missing passengers.
0+	There is evidence that the *Harbinger* was in the system. Before disappearing, its transponder pinged its location before disappearing. It was not within 100 diameters of the mainworld. No further information is available.
3+	As above but the Travellers determine that the *Harbinger* came out of jump in the outer system. The light delay was approximately five hours.
6+	All of the above and the Travellers can approximate the coordinates of the *Harbinger* with a successful Average (8+) Astrogation check (2D minutes, EDU).

Success with Effect 3+ gives the Travellers the approximate location of the *Harbinger* in the outer system. It is nearly five billion kilometres away. Effect 6+ gives them an almost exact location. Even in a ship with Thrust 6, it would take more than two weeks to get there, so making a microjump is the best solution.

They might be concerned about the welfare of the passengers. Even with a delay of five hours, they can tell that the ship is not emitting a Signal GK or other distress call. However, they are not responding to hails, either. The long-range IR sensors of the starport indicate that the *Harbinger* is emitting heat, which is indicative of a functioning power plant, so there is hope. The ship is of a very unusual class, one native to Dlan, so its specifications are impossible to find. They cannot tell whether the power signature is normal or not.

There are few ships that far out in the system and neither Irlu nor Reference (whichever system was selected) can spare a ship for a rescue operation when the ship in question is not even asking for help. So, it is up to the Travellers to solve the problem.

If the Travellers gained Effect 6+ and they use the coordinates to perform a microjump, it takes them within 100+4D kilometres of the *Harbinger* – very close! If they only had Effect 3+, then they are jumping blind to the approximate location of the ship and must recalibrate with sensors after they exit jump. Make an Average (8+) Electronics (sensors) check (INT) to locate the ship. If successful, they find that it is 4D x 100,000 kilometres away.

With Effect 0+, they do not have the location at all, merely a blip on the starport radar and proof that the ship's transponder did announce its arrival. They will have to search for more data, taking D3 more days after which they may reroll the original Electronics (sensors) check on the Clues table. They may repeat the process until they obtain the specificity required (Effect 3+).

MOUNTING THE RESCUE MISSION

When they arrive, the status of the ship has not changed. It is not transmitting a distress call but it gives off a power signature, albeit a weaker one than detected at the highport. As they come in close, they see the reasons why.

Having never seen this class of ship before, the Travellers cannot know what to expect but upon approach it is clear that something is wrong. The *Harbinger* is being consumed by a destructive microbot swarm, which seems to be randomly gobbling up the hull until nothing is left. Approximately 30 percent of the outer hull has been consumed, giving it the look of an aluminium can that has had several orifices burned into it. If they enter the ship, they discover that the consumption was not limited to the exterior. The interior floors, bulkheads and other surfaces are being consumed. This does not include any of the ship's drives but exposure to vacuum of several systems has caused them to shut down, limiting the power signature of the ship.

The Travellers can obtain a sample of the microbots to see that their design is quite simple; they chew up hull on one end of their tiny chassis and jettison it out the other, crumpled and dismembered. They should be especially careful with the sample since it has the ability to process a bonded superdense armoured hull. The microbots reproduce using portions of the material they consume, so in time they will eat the entire ship. If the Travellers inadvertently touch or mishandle an infected part of the *Harbinger*, they could bring the infection back to their ship. Ideally, they will have a cybernetics or robotics toolkit, each of which will have countermeasures to prevent this from happening and containers for a sample of the microbots if they want to investigate the virus further. Refer to pages 121–123 of the *Traveller Core Rulebook* for more information about the toolkit.

THE MICROBOT VIRUS

The virus was lab-created on Dlan and is designed to do exactly what it is doing; slowly eat and destroy the hull of a ship. It was planted on the ship, whereupon it was activated during the jump to Irlu or Reference. It is a miracle that it did not cause the ship to explode in jumpspace, or at the very least cause a misjump.

Whatever the case may be, someone wanted the *Harbinger* destroyed before it reached its destination.

ENTERING THE *HARBINGER*

There are multiple ways to enter the ship. The most obvious is the airlock but it is riddled with microbot damage. Travellers who opt to enter through the airlock risk microbot contamination. Without taking some sort of precaution, each Traveller who attempts to enter this way inadvertently touches some of the microbots on a roll of 9+. If the Travellers state that they are actively trying to avoid the obvious microbot infestations, they may avoid this fate altogether by making a few Average (8+) Vacc Suit or DEX checks during their progress through the ship. Travellers who accidentally touch the microbots have their vacc suits consumed within 2D minutes but they do not consume biological matter, so if they can get back to the safety of their own ship or make it to one of the few remaining pressurised sections of the *Harbinger*, they will be safe.

INFECTION

The Travellers will not necessarily know if they have become infected by the microbots. They should take precautions to prevent contamination of their own ship. If they *do* infect their ship, they will have to cut out parts of it wholesale and then replace them. Once a microbot infestation has begun, there is no way to reverse the damage other than to excise the infected portions of the hull.

The only sections whose hull integrity remains intact are engineering and one of the two staterooms. Everything else has been exposed to vacuum.

1. Bridge: The bridge is occupied by two crew members, sitting at the ship's console. They appear to be deceased but closer examination reveals that they have working machinery within them. They are biorobots with a vat-grown outer casing of human-like flesh which covers their robot innards. Their skin has been affected by exposure to vacuum but not as severely as human skin would be. The two can be revived if the Travellers do not simply mistake them for dead.

2. Common Area and Accommodations: There are only two staterooms, one of which has its door open but the other is closed and vacuum sealed. The adjacent barracks are empty.

3. Low Berths and Clone Tanks: There are 10 passengers, all of whom are in cold sleep in the ship's low berths – six in the standard low berths and four crammed into the emergency low berth. To rescue the passengers, the Travellers must either find a way to restore hull integrity before reviving them (difficult given the microbot damage) or connect the low berths to a temporary power source and transfer them to their own ship. There is also the matter of the 10 clone tanks, three of which are also occupied by clones. The tanks appear to be being used as makeshift low berths.

Fortunately for the occupants, the microbot virus has only consumed part of the room, destroying four of the clone tanks but leaving the remaining six intact. None of the low berths have been affected. An investigation of the low berths and clone tanks reveals that all are highly modular, allowing them to be removed and reinstalled elsewhere. An Average (8+) Investigate

CLASS: Pilgrim

The *Harbinger* is a specialised ship designed for the express purpose of manufacturing and transporting Virasin pilgrims across vast expanses of space. Worshippers are not allowed to leave their homeworld of Dlan but can make copies of their consciousnesses, upload them to a computer and then have them downloaded into clones manufactured en route to their destination. Most pilgrimages cover great distances, so there is time to create the clones, download consciousnesses into them and situate them in accommodations before the voyage reaches its final destination. For more information on consciousness upload and download, refer to Consciousness Transfer in the *Singularity Sourcebook*.

TL15		Tons	Cost (MCr)
Hull	200 tons, Close Structure	—	8
	Radiation Shielding	—	15
Armour	Bonded Superdense, Armour: 2	4.8	2.4
M-Drive	Thrust 2 (increased size)	5	6
J-Drive	Jump 3 (decreased fuel x3)	20	45
Power Plant	Fusion (TL15), Power 20	1	2
Fuel Tanks	J-3, 12 weeks of operation	54	—
Bridge		10	1
Computer	Computer/10bis	—	0.24
Sensors	Civilian Grade	1	3
Weapons	Double Turrets (long range, high yield, pulse lasers) x2	2	7
Subcraft	Docking Space (20 tons)	22	5.5
	Launch	—	2.63
Systems	Fuel Processor (20 tons/day)	1	0.05
	Ram Scoops (100 tons/week)	20	5
	Clone Tanks (improved) x10	5	2.5
	Medical Bay	4	2
Staterooms	Standard x2	8	1
	Barracks x30	30	1.5
	Low Berths x6	3	0.3
	Emergency Low Berth	0.25	0.25
Software	Manoeuvre	—	—
	Jump Control/3	—	0.3
	Library	—	—
	Intellect	—	—
	Anti-Hijack/1	—	6
	Virtual Gunner/1	—	5
Common Areas		2	0.2
Cargo		6	—

Crew

Pilot/Astrogator, Engineer, Medic

Hull: 80

Running Costs

MAINTENANCE COST

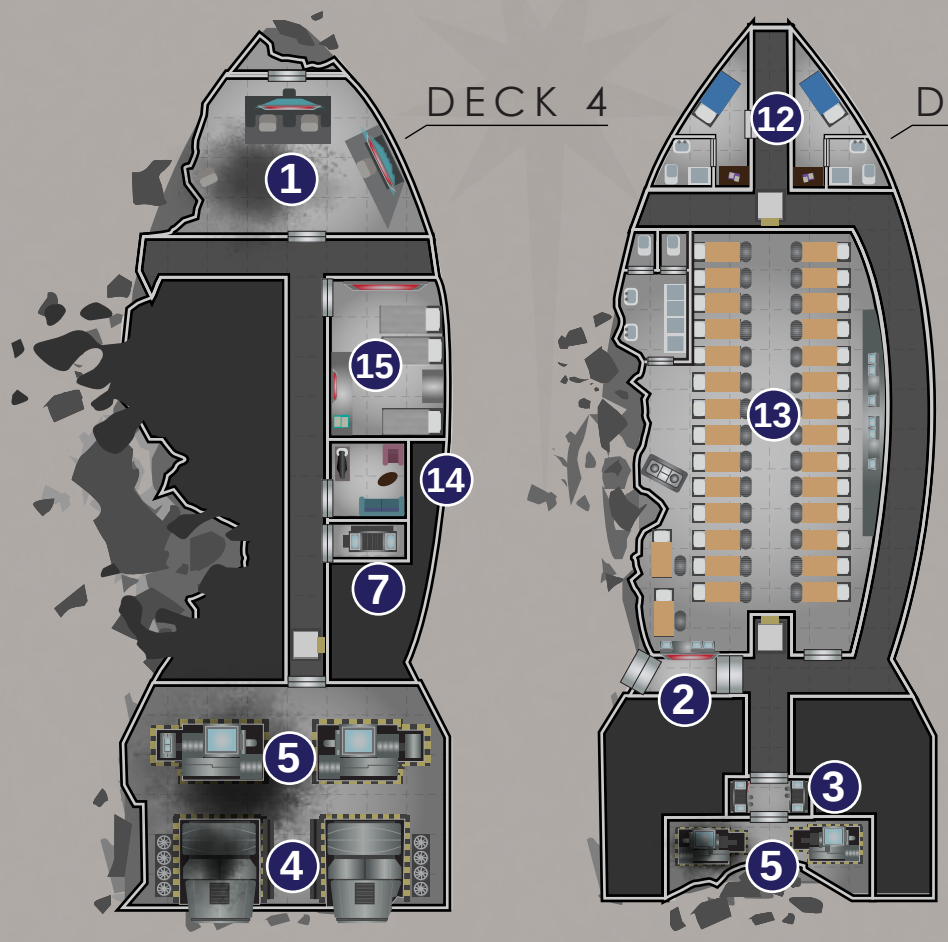
Cr9323/month

PURCHASE COST

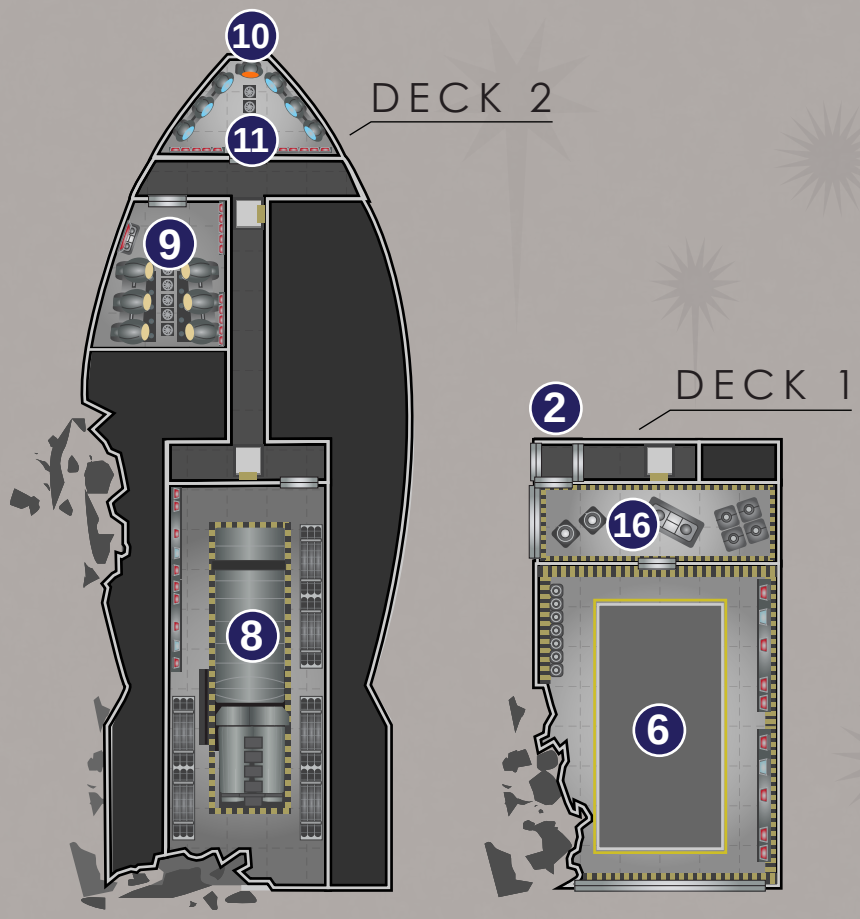
MCr111.87

Power Requirements

Basic Ship Systems	40
Manoeuvre Drive	40
Jump Drive	60
Low Berths	13
Sensors	1
Weapons	18
Fuel Processor	1
Medical Bay	1
Low Berths	1



PILGRIM-CLASS TRANSPORT



1. Bridge & sensors
2. Airlock
3. Power plant
4. M-drive
5. J-drive
6. Docking space
7. Fuel processor
8. Ram scoops
9. Clone tanks
10. Emergency low berth
11. Low berths
12. Staterooms
13. Barracks
14. Common areas
15. Medical bay
16. Cargo

check (1D minutes, EDU) reveals that a data storage unit is attached to the clone tanks. Its contents are encrypted but with a successful Very Difficult (12+) Electronics (computers) check (1D x 10 minutes, INT), the Travellers may view its contents: a backup of each cloned pilgrim's consciousness.

Clones
STR 7 DEX 7 END 7
AOC (citizens) 1

The clones are bald, hairless, sexless receptacles for the pilgrims, designed only to carry a copy of their consciousness for the pilgrimage. Each wears a single matt-grey metal accessory as part of their clothing.

NAALIR'S DISCOVERIES

While the Travellers rescue the pilgrims, Naalir investigates the *Harbinger*. It discovers several interesting things about the ship, in particular the clone tanks and medical bay, which includes an autodoc that assists with consciousness transfers.

Naalir was aware that this technology existed but seeing this unique application gives the curious CI more information to work with. In particular, the Dlani application of consciousness transfer provides extended Sanity (STY) for inhabitants of clone bodies. For more information about consciousness transfer and its effects on STY, refer to Consciousness Transfer on page 73 of the *Singularity Sourcebook*. This discovery will help Naalir to perform consciousness transfers for the Travellers during the events of Act 2.

If the Travellers know about Naalir at this point, then they are probably aware that it is 'present' on the *Harbinger* during the rescue operation, exploring its data pathways, ship's log and the microbot virus.

Naalir does not directly share its observations of the *Harbinger*, so the Travellers have the opportunity to do that for themselves and make their own conclusions.

WELCOME ABOARD

Once the pilgrims are transferred to the *Ventura Fortuna* and awakened, the voyage begins. All of the clones are identical, androgynous in appearance and may only be distinguished by their personalities and behaviours. This presents a challenge for the Referee. Each of the clones must be portrayed in a different way but they have no distinguishing marks or any physical attributes to differentiate them. They all wear the same pilgrim robe and tunic. However, each does wear one simple piece of jewellery: a brooch, a lapel pin, a buckle or a pendant, something that differentiates them from each other. The Referee should select one unique item per pilgrim and associate it with their identity. Each of these is a personal media scrambler, described on page 60. Note that these items of jewellery are not flashy. They appear to be made of some simple metal, dark grey, with a matt surface.

At first, none of the pilgrims verbally identifies themselves. If asked their names, most simply do not respond. Some appear to be offended by being asked. This changes over the course of the adventure, especially after a few stops at ports of call, and the events of The First Murder, but at first they are shy and withdrawn. They are not being deliberately taciturn. They are xenophobic, accustomed only to life on their crowded, high-tech, authoritarian homeworld. Adjusting to life away from Dlan takes some time.

The Pilgrims table can be used by the Referee to add subtle differences between the clones. The Name column displays the clone's source consciousness identity and the Background column provides Referee-only information about each of them. Keep in mind that the pilgrims maintain anonymity for the first part of the voyage, so the Travellers are unable to learn their names and backgrounds. Personality, behaviour and identifying jewellery piece are all the Travellers have to go on initially.

When asked what they want to see and which ports of call they want to visit, most of the pilgrims do not provide much information. Remember, they are members of a religion that does not allow its people to leave their homeworld, lest they be excommunicated from their church. This voyage is a special dispensation that allows them to experience the worlds of Charted Space. They will never again have this opportunity but they are also mentally unprepared for what they will see.

Select one or two who express an interest in seeing worlds where horrible things have happened. Another pair have an interest in seeing the excesses of Imperial society. Dlan is an advanced world but not a cosmopolitan one. They seem to confirm the righteousness of their own homeworld's culture of xenophobia. Seeing the remnants of historical disasters, dystopian societies and other problems gives them an odd sense of pleasure.

Pilgrims

Name	Background	Personality and Behaviour
Adulan Astrin Alethian	Son of recently appointed Archduke Dulinor of Ilelish. Adulan is on a mission to Capital.	Initially quiet but very observant and seems very confident despite being silent. **Key Trait**: Frequent and confident eye contact.
Vindal Ovvian	Once a high-ranking Virasin priest, Vindal left his official role and gave up his vestments to become a musician.	Rarely present and does not interact much with his fellow pilgrims. Pensative. **Key Trait**: Hums a lot and plays air conductor with his fingers.
Baliila Cumo	A well-connected parishioner who used her considerable influence to gain a spot in the pilgrimage.	More talkative than all the others, this clone is inquisitive and curious to learn more about her surroundings and the worlds she visits. **Key Trait**: Chatty and outgoing.
Rhoda Zallis	A devout Virasin, Rhoda prays more than the others and scoffs at their lack of piety.	Aloof and pious, prays and studies excessively. **Key Trait**: Rolls eyes at other Virasin frequently.
Oeue Dian	Despite her lithe clone form, waddles and lumbers a bit as if much larger. Must be a pre-embodiment mental habit.	Friendly but not overly talkative. Seems to be holding a grudge. **Key Trait**: Unusual gait.
Chan Cotard	A mediocre scholar on Dlan, Chan behaves as if he is a brilliant academic.	Engages in intellectual conversation but reveals how little he knows about any given subject. **Key Trait**: Insecure, overcompensates.
Ziwal Oldiportrae	Ziwal is an average citizen who won a lottery to join the pilgrimage.	Friendly and genuine. More approachable than others. **Key Trait**: Smiles a lot.
Poldiwart Eezun	A powerful businessman on Dlan, Poldiwart is furious that none of his peers were selected for this pilgrimage. He's stuck with strangers.	Irritable and taciturn. Seems terribly disappointed with the experience of being a pilgrim. **Key Trait**: Complains incessantly.
Uzhi Kottin	A natural resource assessor by profession, Uzhi is an avid outdoorsman and enjoys the various ports of call more than the others.	Quiet and studious aboard ship but gregarious and happy when visiting other worlds. **Key Trait**: Curious and intellectual.
Khaury Glinton	Khaury was actually killed on Dlan and replaced by Szoudensh Vizenk, a Suerrat assassin from Ilelish.	Observant and kind of predatory. Rarely speaks but when he does, he is are curt and to the point. **Key Trait**: Breaks eye contact

Worlds of interest will include...

Irlu, whose alleged meritocracy is corrupt and riddled with inefficiency. Society somehow works *in spite* of the government on this world but clearly things do not run as well here as they do on Dlan.

Lalandra, where the Museum of Naval History provides many exciting and fascinating historical exhibits, but also decries the failure of the Confederation Navy and debunks many of the myths of naval strategy in general. The concept of an interstellar navy is known to the Dlani but they have never seen evidence of one in person, having never left their homeworld.

Velpare, whose exiled duke and arbitrarily appointed barony manage the world, laying bare the unreliability of the Imperial Nobility.

Refer to *The Third Imperium* for details about many of the worlds on the route, each of which may inspire unique experiences for the pilgrims. As they become more familiar with the astrography and the ports of call on their itinerary, they might ask for additional, off-the-route ports of call at the Referee's discretion.

The Virasin pilgrims do not ask for much. They want very basic food, seeking only sustenance with little interest in flavour or culinary variation. It is unclear

as to whether they even have the ability to taste. Their android bodies seem very simple. Close examination, if such a thing is possible, reveals that they do not have the complete array of human functions. For example, they cannot reproduce. However, their thermal systems are much more advanced than those of typical humans; they can even survive in vacuum for several minutes longer than a human could with reduced tissue damage.

They lead a very ascetic, almost monastic existence while aboard ship, spending a great deal of time alone and separate from one another, reading, consuming approved content and meditating in the privacy of their staterooms.

THE FIRST MURDER

After one or two ports of call have been visited, one of the pilgrims is murdered.

The body is found in the halls of the accommodations section, its carotid artery severed by a sharp object. The victim may be selected from the ranks of the pilgrims but will not be Adulan (the intended target) or Khaury (the murderer).

No one heard the screams of the victim, which might indicate that a null field projector was used, a device that creates a privacy 'bubble', blocking sound and potentially blurring the contents of the bubble to people outside its perimeter.

The Travellers will not initially know who committed the crime and might not even know who the victim is. Without active surveillance equipment turned on, there is little evidence to work with but a murder among the passengers is obviously cause for concern for the Travellers and the rest of the crew.

The Travellers might react to this situation any number of ways. They could contact the authorities at a starport. The local police will not get involved. The murder occurred during jumpspace, so technically it falls under the purview of the Port Authority of the system to which they were travelling when the crime was committed.

They might also insist on having the ship's surveillance equipment reactivated but the Virasin refuse to allow this; it goes against the tenets of their religion. They will have to figure out an alternative plan. Stationing themselves as guards in various parts of the ship might work but they will have to be vigilant. The murderer will discover that they failed to get their target and is going to try again.

Murder might normally be cause to end a voyage but Adulan, who asserts himself to Captain Eilerfaust and the Travellers, insists that they continue. In fact, pilgrim deaths are relatively common on pilgrimages. While violence is abhorrent to the Virasin, the galaxy can be a deadly place. Many worshippers do not make it home safely and the death of a pilgrim is no reason to call the voyage off.

GUARDS! GUARDS!

There is also the matter of the clones' bodyguards. If the Travellers salvaged the two crew/guards from the *Harbinger*, they are supposed to be responsible for the safety and protection of the pilgrims. However, each has been equipped with an electronic 'blind spot' which is activated by remote control. Vizenk activated their blind spot using a device hidden in his personal media scrambler. A close investigation of the device will reveal its purposes on a successful Difficult (10+) Investigate check (1D minutes, INT).

Arming the clones is not an option. The Virasin abhor violence and will not accept weaponry.

If the Travellers salvaged the clone blanks and data storage device, these present several options for them. They could use a clone blank to 'resurrect' the victim, installing their consciousness into one of the blanks. Keep in mind that the revived consciousness will have no recollection of events leading up to the murder. Their last memory will be when they had their consciousness uploaded to the data storage device on Dlan. However, it does give them a second chance at life.

If they revive the second clone in the batch, they are unable to download the consciousness of the victim or any other to this clone because it already has one. Clone 2 has the artificial personality of an assassin. Therefore, it is not the consciousness of an actual person but rather a personality type, programmed with a certain set of behaviours and motives. It will attempt to play the role of a pilgrim long enough to determine which of the other clones

is Adulan and then kill him. However, note that while Clone 2 has significantly better combat skills than Vizenk, its physical characteristics are limited to those of the clones. It lacks investigatory skills, so its effectiveness in determining which of the other clones is Adulan is limited to bluntly asking who is who, collecting data on each of them and observing conversations and behaviours, all of which might arouse suspicion, especially when one notices Clone 2's rather obvious social limitations.

Another possibility is that the Travellers copy one of their own consciousnesses onto one of the clones. If it was brought aboard, Naalir has studied the data storage device and it can create a rudimentary copy of a Traveller's consciousness to install on one of the blank clones. Naalir has not yet perfected the technique, so the copy would have a limited lifespan, perhaps two or three weeks. This would afford them the opportunity to mix with the others, collect clues, potentially solve the mystery, or even be the next victim!

GOING UNDERCOVER

While the Virasin clones cannot commit acts of violence due to religious restrictions, the Travellers certainly can. The clones are identical and if one of the Travellers were to have their consciousness copied and placed into a replica pilgrim body, they might be able to 'go undercover', playing the role of a pilgrim and acting as a decoy.

If the Travellers salvaged the remaining clone tanks from the *Harbinger*, they have the tools they need to implant a consciousness into one of the existing clones, or even to create a new clone. Doing the latter will require certain materials that they will have to acquire. A Traveller with the Science (biology, chemistry or cybernetics) skill can determine what is required after making an Average (8+) check (1D hours, EDU).

To copy a consciousness, build a clone and embody it with the consciousness, three checks must be successfully completed. Copying a consciousness requires a task chain: First a Traveller must make a Difficult (10+) Medic check (2D x 10 minutes) to prepare the Traveller whose consciousness is being copied. This presumes that they have a medikit of TL12+ or a scientific toolkit (see the *Traveller Core Rulebook* for these). If the check is successful, apply the Effect to a Difficult (10+) Electronics (computers) check (2D hours, EDU). If the task chain is successful, the Travellers have successfully copied a consciousness.

The second check is to create the clone. If a fully functional clone tank was salvaged from the *Harbinger*, this is a straightforward task. One of the Travellers must make an Average (8+) Science (biology, chemistry or cybernetics) check (2D hours, EDU) to create the clone. Since the tank came from the *Harbinger*, which creates the Virasin pilgrim clones en route, the template for the identical clones is already present in the tank's computer. If the tank has incurred any damage, increase the check to Difficult (10+).

Finally the third and final part is the most difficult: Have one of the Travellers make a Very Difficult (12+) Medic check (2D hours, EDU) to transfer the consciousness. The Referee may optionally allow this to be a task chain, allowing another Traveller with Electronics (computers) to complete a Difficult (10+) check (2D x 10 minutes, EDU) first. These tasks are much simpler for experienced operators but the difficulty reflects the Travellers' inexperience with the equipment and process.

If the requisite equipment is available and all of these checks are made, the Travellers have themselves a working clone, embodied with the consciousness of one of the Travellers. After the source Traveller and their clone get over the cognitive dissonance of sharing the same identity, they are ready to perform their undercover sting operation!

WHODUNNIT

The Referee has several pieces to work with in this murder mystery but first let us get to the motive. The target was Adulan but without any evidence as to who is who, the murderer took a chance and killed the wrong pilgrim. The Referee may optionally review the Personality and Behaviour column of the Pilgrims table to determine who might have been mistaken for Adulan.

The murderer is Szoudensh Vizenk, a Suerrat assassin whose consciousness replaced that of Khaury Glinton after Vizenk killed him on Dlan before he could have his consciousness uploaded to the *Harbinger* clone tanks. It was necessary to kill the source to preserve the cover story. Vizenk could not abide anyone learning that one of the passengers was not actually Glinton. Violence is abhorrent to the Dlani and murder is beyond barbaric. It is extremely rare on Dlan.

Vizenk is in the employ of a proxy of Archduke Dulinor who does not want his son's clone to reach Capital. It was not easy to get the Suerrat down to the surface of Dlan, where he could pose as a devout Virasa, but Dulinor has the resources to pull it off.

The plan to have his son's clone killed was not made lightly. The consequences are heavy for the Virasin. If one's clone does not return safely to Dlan, the church excommunicates them from the faith. This would be devastating to Adulan but Dulinor never wanted his son to join the Virasin religion. When Adulan made the decision to pledge his faith to the Virasin, Dulinor was furious. He had wanted Adulan to follow in his footsteps and become the eventual Archduke of Ilelish. By joining the faith, Adulan basically abdicated his title and potential ascendance to the supreme noble title in the sector. However, despite the choice he made, he is not all that different from his father philosophically.

Adulan did not make his choice until he was 16 years old, giving him many years under the tutelage of Dulinor. The two had their differences, obviously, but they see things largely the same. At Capital, Adulan intends to speak to the Moot. The speech he wants to give is not all that far from what Dulinor himself might say. They both believe that the Imperium is due for reforms and that without them there will be great strife. Unfortunately, Dulinor is blinded by his belief that Adulan has betrayed him and does not see that the two could forge an alliance that links the Virasin to the faithless who defend their homeworld.

If Vizenk fails to get the job done, Dulinor has created an 'insurance policy' of sorts. The second of the three clone 'blanks' is a second assassin, one with superior abilities to those of the implanted Suerrat. If it is awakened, it will attempt to kill Adulan, massacring the entire pilgrimage one-by-one, if necessary.

Figuring out who the murderer is will be a challenge. There are many ways the Travellers can go about it. They might psychologically profile each of the clones in an attempt to ferret out the killer. One avenue that might give them the best data is a review of the consciousness profiles on the data storage machine. The machine contains copies of each pilgrim consciousness. If they compare profiles to the behaviour of each cloned pilgrim, they might notice that Khaury Klinton does not fit his described profile and warrants closer observation.

THE SECOND MURDER ATTEMPT

After Vizenk discovers that he has failed to kill his intended target, he will make another attempt. He continues to try to figure out which of the other clones is Adulan and if successful, bides his time until the opportunity arises to assassinate him.

This is a highly variable situation. If the Travellers have either solved the mystery or concocted a way to surveil the pilgrims without the use of technology, then they can foil the murderer before he can strike again. However, Vizenk is aware that he has a failsafe: Clone 2, the psychotic murderclone in one of the tanks. If Vizenk is concerned that the Travellers might be onto him, he attempts to release Clone 2, which then also tries to kill Adulan by whatever means it can.

Consider that Vizenk is not a competent investigator. He could select another victim *incorrectly*. Before too long, the liner will be littered with the bodies of dead clones. The Referee should play out Vizenk's arc as if it is happening concurrently with that of the Travellers, giving them the chance to see him trying to determine which of the clones is Adulan.

The second murder attempt should follow the first by at least two or three weeks. Give the Travellers time to try to solve the mystery, or at least determine who the suspects are. They might be able to avoid the release of Clone 2 altogether but finding a way to introduce Clone 2 to the plot will illustrate the determination that *someone* has to kill Adulan. The mayhem of a renegade murderclone aboard the *Ventura Fortuna* could also make for an exciting action sequence.

ALL ROADS LEAD TO ANTHER

If the Travellers manage to keep Adulan alive for the duration of the voyage, then they eventually reach their terminus at Anther. Adulan, the remaining pilgrims and their guards – if they were salvaged – disembark the *Ventura Fortuna* and catch a charter to Capital. Should the Travellers desire to be a part of that voyage, they can either petition Captain Eilerfaust to extend their voyage to Capital, or – if they know about it – can take the *Velos tis Alitheia*, outfitting its expedition module with enough low berths for the remaining pilgrims.

While it is not within the specifics of their contract, Adulan requests that the Travellers accompany him to Capital. It has become apparent that someone wants him dead and he is not confident in his ability to get to his destination safely without their help. Ultimately, it is up to them but if they choose not to help Adulan, he finds a charter to Capital without their help and is assassinated before he can deliver his speech to the Moot. Should the Travellers attend the event with him, the attempt is not made until after the speech.

AN AUDIENCE WITH THE MOOT

Adulan's arrival at Capital is not without fanfare. It is announced that the anonymous clone contains the consciousness of none other than the son of Archduke Dulinor of Ilelish. After arriving at Cleon Downport, he and the other pilgrims are assigned a security detail and whisked away to accommodations near the Imperial Park, with the Grand Palace of Arbellatra and the Moot Tower in view from their windows.

The concept of embodiment is… uncomfortable on Capital. While the Emperor and the peerage are not naïve, there is a tendency to overlook the many controversial practices that occur on some Imperial worlds. Cloning is legal on many worlds but consciousness transfer was declared illegal by Emperor Paulo III in 1070 'because it tampers with the mind of a sentient life form'. Adulan's very presence on Capital would be an affront to Imperial law if not for the fact that Virasin pilgrims are granted an exception. Since it has been deemed the only way they can 'leave' their homeworld, and the transfer is designed to be temporary with the inhabitant of the clone eventually returning to their own body, the practice has been declared acceptable.

On the second day after his arrival, Adulan is escorted to the Moot Tower to address the peerage. The content of his speech is unknown. Politicians do not like surprises but Adulan is elusive when asked to preview the content of his speech. After he ascends the dais, he begins:

My noble and honourable cousins, I have come here today to bring great tidings from the capital of Ilelish, my homeworld, Dlan. As a parishioner of the Virasin religion, my source intellect remains on that world, where it shall be until I die and become immersed in the divine knowledge of God. The being who stands before you here today is an artificial husk containing the recorded consciousness of Adulan Oldothon Ilethian, ducal heir to Ilelish and scion of the Archduke Dulinor Astrin Ilethian.

The Imperium is not well. The dream of a broad and expansive empire linked by trade and military power has reached its limits. This form of government has become stale in the intervening centuries while advancements have been made in other areas. The people are restless and they want change. They want to use the technological power at their disposal to create new ways of doing things, to serve their local constituencies, to forge their own identities.

At this point, there is grumbling in the audience from various members of the Moot. A few shouts of 'Treason!' echo in the chamber but Adulan is undeterred. In fact, he responds.

Not treason... patriotism! If this grand experiment is to continue, adjustments must be made, freedoms granted and the people pacified. Mark my words: The Third Imperium must diminish and in its place must rise a new, more resilient, more responsive government.

Adulan turns and humbly walks off the dais to a cacophony of shouts, epithets and a few cheers. Imperial Guard soldiers create an avenue for him to exit the tower and he makes his way to a transport with the intention of going to the starport and leaving Capital for the long return flight to Dlan. However, Adulan has stirred some strong emotions and although his speech was intended to surprise the audience, the speech was acquired beforehand using advanced intrusion technology and leaked to certain individuals. An extreme pro-Imperial faction obtained a copy of the speech and has planned a nefarious response. An assassination attempt is made en route to Cleon Down Starport.

Attempting to get a weapon into the Imperial Park is virtually impossible and the region hundreds of square kilometres around is covered with surveillance devices and monitored by drones, but there are other ways to kill someone. At the last minute, the air/raft which was supposed to take Adulan to the starport is replaced with another. Transportation management can be chaotic, and this is not uncommon, but Adulan is an important guest and if the Travellers are present, they are right to be suspicious. This is their first opportunity to stop the assassination attempt. Allow the Travellers to make a Difficult (10+) Admin check (1D minutes, SOC). If they succeed, they detect irregularities in the scheduling system, including the use of a non-sanctioned transportation service. An additional Average (8+) Investigate check (1D minutes, INT) reveals that the agency the air/raft came from is a front, a non-existent company. They may refuse the transport and insist on an alternative, perhaps one that they arrange themselves, or which is selected by Moot Administrative Services.

Should they fail the check or not check at all, Adulan gets into the air/raft and proceeds to Cleon Down Starport. En route, the attempt on his life occurs. The assassin is operating in an apartment building and has several football-sized drones in the air to track the progress of Adulan's air/raft as it makes its way across the city. The air/raft itself has had crucial engine components painted with an explosive resin and a micro detonator installed to set it off. To avoid timing mishaps, the assassin intends to detonate the explosives manually, as the vehicle flies overhead. He uses a meson transceiver to prevent any interference from stopping the transmission to the detonator. If one or more of the Travellers is in the air/raft with Adulan, their lives are in just as much danger.

If the Travellers are on the air/raft or flying aboard another aerial vehicle nearby, allow them to make a Difficult (10+) Recon check (INT) to notice the drones. Success indicates the Travellers detect their pattern and recognise that they are observing Adulan's air/raft. A subsequent Average (8+) Electronics (comms) check (EDU) reveals that the drones are using undetectable meson communications technology.

If the Travellers demand that the air/raft be grounded immediately, they save Adulan from crash landing. If they fail to detect the drones and the assassin is allowed to detonate the explosives, the air/raft is disabled and begins to plummet to earth, whereupon the impact will kill all passengers aboard. If a Traveller with the Flyer skill is aboard, allow them to make a Very Difficult (12+) Flyer (grav) check (DEX) to use the air/raft's residual gravitics to guide the craft into a very rough crash landing. Success indicates a well-executed crash landing with all occupants sustaining 3D Damage. Armour does not reduce this. Effect 6+ means no damage is taken at all. Failure results in a deadly crash landing, killing everyone aboard. If no Travellers are aboard, they might attempt to execute some amazing daredevil jump to the air/raft but the chances of success are minimal, raising all checks to Formidable (14+) difficulty.

Tracking the assassin afterwards is challenging. However, with some combination of Streetwise, Recon and Investigate checks, they might be able to track him down and confront or capture him. The Travellers are not likely to be armed, given the high Law Level on Capital and their proximity to the Imperial Park but if they do manage to obtain weapons with which to confront the assassin, they must be careful. Capital is teeming with police and the Imperial Guard and any conflict might attract their attention. If they are not cautious, they could be mistaken for the perpetrators of the crime and not the good Samaritans that they are.

FAREWELL DEAR ADULAN

Should the Travellers manage to keep Adulan alive, he, the other pilgrims and their guards make their way to Cleon Down Starport for departure. They fly aboard a chartered vessel until they cross into the neighbouring Dagudashaag sector, where they will transfer to another Dlani transport for the journey home. Adulan thanks the Travellers for their assistance and bids them a fond farewell.

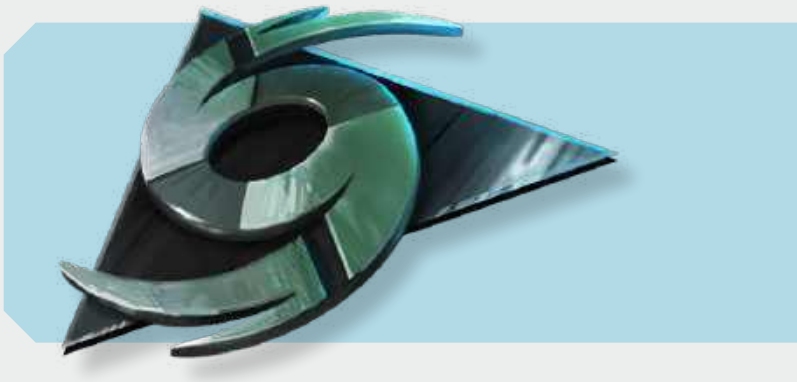
He also leaves them a parting gift: an Archducal Writ of Safe Passage signed with the signet of his father, Archduke Dulinor. Should they ever end up in a pinch, they have guaranteed transportation from one system to the next, sort of the equivalent of a mercenary's repatriation bond coupled with a high passage for the entire group. Such a thing could come in handy someday.

EQUIPMENT AND CHARACTERS

The following equipment and characters are presented in this Departure.

PERSONAL MEDIA SCRAMBLER

This device, often worn within a piece of jewellery or article of clothing, blocks transmitted media from all broadcast sources. Wearing an activated device on one's person prevents them from seeing, hearing or otherwise perceiving transmitted media within a two-metre range and scrambles visibility of any billboards, holoscreens, radio transmissions or other non-biological sources. It allows the reception of speech and other physical or environmental sights and sounds. It is particular to the Dlani, each of whom wears one in order to remain within their individual media-exclusive bubbles.



Item	TL	Kg	Cost
Personal Media Scrambler	15	—	Cr20000

The pair of biorobots aboard the *Harbinger* are designed to fly the ship and conduct basic security. They are similar in appearance but not identical.

Robot	Size	Hits	Locomotion	Speed	TL	Cost
Dlani Biorobot	5	22	Walker	5m	15	MCr3.6
Skills	Astrogation 2, Athletics (endurance) 1, Engineer (j-drive) 2, Gun Combat (energy) 2, Melee (all) 1, Pilot (spacecraft) 2					
Attacks	Fists (2D+1)					
Manipulators	2x (STR 9 DEX 9)					
Endurance	As Biological Being					
Traits	ATV, Heightened Senses, IR Vision, Natural-Looking, Self-Repairing					
Programming	Very Advanced, INT 11					
Options	Auditory Sensor (broad spectrum), Bio-Robot (enhanced), Light Intensifier Sensor (advanced), Transceiver, 5km (basic), Vacuum Environment Protection, Voder Speaker, Wireless Data Link					

SZOUDENSH VIZENK (KHAURY KLINTON)

TRAITS			—	SKILLS
STR	7	INT	8	Gun Combat (slug) 2, Melee 1 (blade), Recon 1, Stealth 1
DEX	7	EDU	8	
END	7	SOC	6	

The clone that is allegedly Khaury Klinton is actually implanted with the consciousness of Szoudensh Vizenk, a Suerrat insurrectionist. He has been given the mission to determine which of the clones is Adulan and to kill him. If he succeeds, he then kills himself, having fulfilled his mission.

CLONE 2

TRAITS			—	SKILLS
STR	7	INT	9	Athletics (dexterity) 2, Gun Combat (energy) 1, Gun Combat (slug) 3, Melee 3 (blade), Melee 2 (unarmed), Recon 1, Stealth 2
DEX	7	EDU	6	
END	7	SOC	2	

The second clone blank is a lethal assassin. It has been implanted with an artificial (psychotic) personality and the imperative to kill Adulan if Vizenk is unable to get the job done. It will also kill Vizenk's clone to make sure its tracks are covered, followed by offing itself. Clone 2 speaks only when necessary and its dour facial expression belies its psychological state. It will attempt to acquire whatever weaponry and armour it can to complete its mission be that knives from the galley or a gauss pistol and flak jacket from the ship's locker.

THE HITMAN

TRAITS			—	SKILLS
STR	7	INT	8	Athletics (dexterity) 1, Electronics (remote ops) 2, Explosives 3, Flyer (grav) 1, Gun Combat (energy) 1, Melee 2 (unarmed), Recon 2, Stealth 1
DEX	11	EDU	8	
END	9	SOC	7	
WEAPONS	Personal Defence Laser (3D+3, Auto 2, Zero-G)			
ARMOUR	Cloth Trench Coat (+6)			
EQUIPMENT	Meson Transceiver			

If the clones aboard the *Ventura Fortuna* fail to get the job done, Dulinor has arranged for a local hitman to do it.

FAVOUR

Favour in this adventure will be awarded based on what the Travellers accomplish:

Outcomes

Outcome	Award
The Travellers rescue the Dlani clones from their ship.	1 Political
During the rescue, they recover key technology, such as the clone tanks, the clone blanks and the data storage device that contains backups of the consciousnesses.	1 Political 1 Influencer
If they prevent the second murder from happening.	1 Wealth
If they get Adulan safely to Capital.	1 Political 1 Influencer
If they prevent the hitman from killing Adulan. He is a ronin assassin wanted by the criminal organisation to which he once belonged.	1 Underworld

KNIGHT MOVES

The Imperial nobility is the voice of the Emperor. They are the bureaucracy that collects taxes, makes sure that its citizens follow the letter of the law and, when necessary, calls in the military to restore order. Those who are selected for the noble ranks are expected to serve in accordance with duty and honour, bound by oath, and must serve with honesty, integrity and humility in obeisance to their Emperor. Nobles are not supposed to act in their own self-interests but perform their duties as they believe their Emperor would were he in their place.

The first rank of the nobility is the knight. Noble ranks of baron and above are granted only by the Emperor but knighthoods are assigned by archdukes who, in the unique case of the Core, are also the Emperor. There are two types of nobility: *honour* and *rank*. Many knighthood patents are of the honour variety, a ceremonial role that does not include a fiefdom but does carry a considerable amount of cachet and privilege. Rank knighthoods include enfeoffment – the granting of a fiefdom – almost invariably to a world of lesser importance to the Imperium but one that must be managed by its noble bureaucracy nonetheless. Ironically, some worlds assigned to knights are the most difficult to manage, yet they are assigned to the most junior members of the nobility. A larger world, assigned to a higher ranking noble, usually has more people and an established, world-spanning government that runs itself. Lesser worlds often have a vacuum of leadership and more free territory. While their problems might be smaller, they are no less difficult to resolve and the knight has no one to turn to for help.

During this voyage of the *Ventura Fortuna*, one of the Travellers is granted a knighthood and a position among the rank nobility. At first, this seems glamourous and exciting until it sets in that a knight of the rank nobility has a job to do. The world to which this lucky dame or lord is assigned is a troubled one. The narrative takes on a turn for the surreal when the knighthood in question becomes an object of desire for multiple parties. Before the ceremonial dubbing and granting of insignia can take place, several claimants to the patent make their voices heard and the Travellers become embroiled in a noble controversy. Before all is said and done, they discover why this seemingly minor noble patent is so important to so many people – important enough that they would *kill* for it.

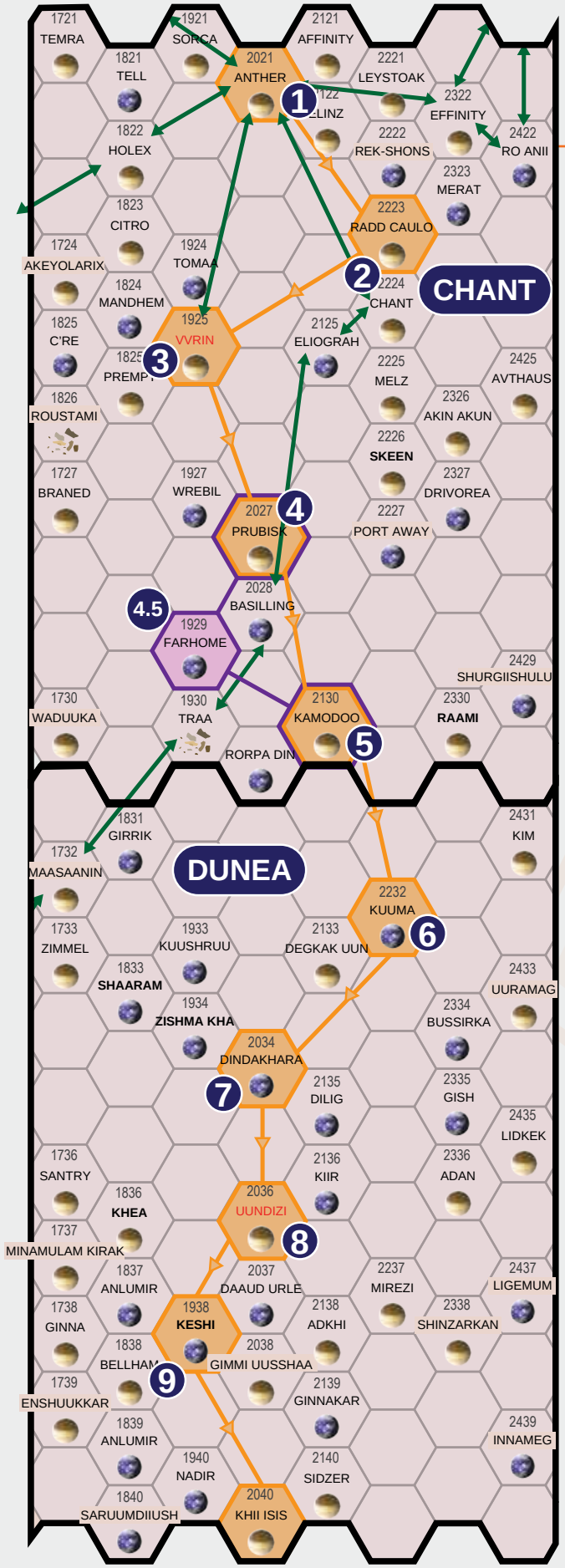
Knight Moves follows the course of a cruise route, in this case the Chanestin Route, as it makes its way from Anther (Core 2021, A300697-E) to Keshi (Core 1938, B566AD8-9). The drama of the adventure coincides with the voyage, starting with the unexpected knighthood award and culminating in a battle to control the fief as the cruise approaches its terminus in Chanestin space. There are multiple opportunities for the Travellers to create route spurs or take secret missions to visit worlds that are off the route, giving the adventure more sandbox appeal.

THE CHANESTIN ROUTE

The Chanestin Route takes passengers on one of the more exotic voyages in the Core. It travels through the antiquated (some would say 'old and run-down') Chant subsector, stopping only at worlds that have avoided the worst of its decline, and into Dunea, home of the long-deposed Chanestin Kingdom. The Chanestin people have a distinct subculture and were never fully indoctrinated into Imperial society. The more extreme among them wage active resistance against their oppressors, while most merely keep up their cultural and spiritual practices, perhaps passively vying for an eventual secession, if such a thing were possible. The Chanestin people see themselves as separate from the Imperium, an island in its vast breadth. Since full-blown rebellion and secession are not realistic options, one controversial idea being floated around is converting the original 25 worlds of the Chanestin Kingdom into a Cultural Zone, much like the Sylean Worlds elsewhere in the Core.

The Travellers embark upon a voyage along this route as normal, administering the embarkation of their passengers, getting them settled and then heading out on their merry way. Run the cruise like any other, as described in the *Singularity Sourcebook*. The action begins to heat up at their very first port of call at Radd Caulo.

THE CHANESTIN ROUTE



1 Anther (2021)
2 Radd Caulo (2223)
3 Vvrin (1925)
4 Prubisk (2027)
4.5 Farhome (1929)
5 Kamodoo (2130)
6 Kuuma (2232)
7 Dindakhara (2034)
8 Uundizi (2036)
9 Keshi (1938)
10 Khii Isis (2040)

Planet (dry)
Planet (water present)
Asteroids (no atmosphere/water)

The Imperium
Cruise Route
Code Duello
X-boat Route

A TURN OF EVENTS

Shortly after the voyage begins, when the ship reaches the Radd Caulo (Core 2223, A866745-A) system, Captain Eilerfaust calls one of the Travellers into his office. He has received an x-boat message on the Traveller's behalf, requesting that they report immediately to the subsector capital at Vvrin (Core 1925, A585799-C). Eilerfaust claims not to know what the purpose of the visit is but as they can see for themselves, it comes directly from His Grace, Duke Maglato Otorre, Chant Subsector Duchy. The message is accompanied by an encrypted data file, activated by the Traveller's biometrics, that provides additional information when opened. Apparently, the Traveller is to be knighted on Vvrin and granted a fiefdom elsewhere in the subsector.

The newly appointed knight might be surprised to find out that Captain Eilerfaust is not the only person to know about the noble patent. The news has made the rounds among all noble passengers aboard the ship. A group of nobles of various ranks invites their new peer to a celebration at the *Ventura Fortuna* gallery and passenger commons. The nobles treat the Traveller to several rounds of drinks and the new knight is bombarded with questions.

Will you retire from your role on ship? You'll have a fief to keep up.

Have you considered what sort of keep you'll have? You simply must have a palatial residence. They might already have one prepared for you but frankly, they're never quite up to snuff. Old, musty places that need a lot of work. Best to create a new one of your own design. I'll connect you with my designer and architect.

When are we invited to your manor? I do hope there's a suitable golf course and spa on site.

Very little is known about the title other than that it is being awarded. This information – and the knighting ceremony itself – shall occur on Vvrin, the next stop on the voyage.

Some degree of discomfort or hilarity may ensue. Depending on the personality of the Traveller, they might choose to lord it over their peers due to their good fortune. On the other hand, they probably were not prepared for such an honour and might be humbled by the news. Either way, the Traveller's good fortune should provide the opportunity for some speculation and good role playing with both their noble peers and fellow Travellers.

SELECTING A TRAVELLER FOR KNIGHHOOD

Ideally, one of the Travellers will already have a Social Standing (SOC) score of 10 or 11. If the Traveller has SOC 10, then reception of the knighthood means a promotion is conferred and SOC is raised to 11. If the Traveller already has SOC 11, they are already a knight but the reception of this patent means they have been promoted from honour nobility to rank nobility. As they might know, this award comes with increased visibility, prestige and responsibility.

If none of the Travellers have the requisite SOC, select the Traveller with the highest SOC and raise it to 11. Alternatively, the Referee may select another character. If this occurs, some form of bond must be formed with the Travellers so they will have a vested interest in the events to come.

VVRIN: ARRIVAL OF THE KNIGHT

Vvrin is the subsector capital and the residential world of Duke Otorre, who divides his time doing the work of the Imperium here and at his ancestral estate on Chant, where he also holds the title of Baron Chant. His state offices, located in the capital city of Glanchuk, abut those of Vvrin's local bureau head, Baron Nidya R'chandi.

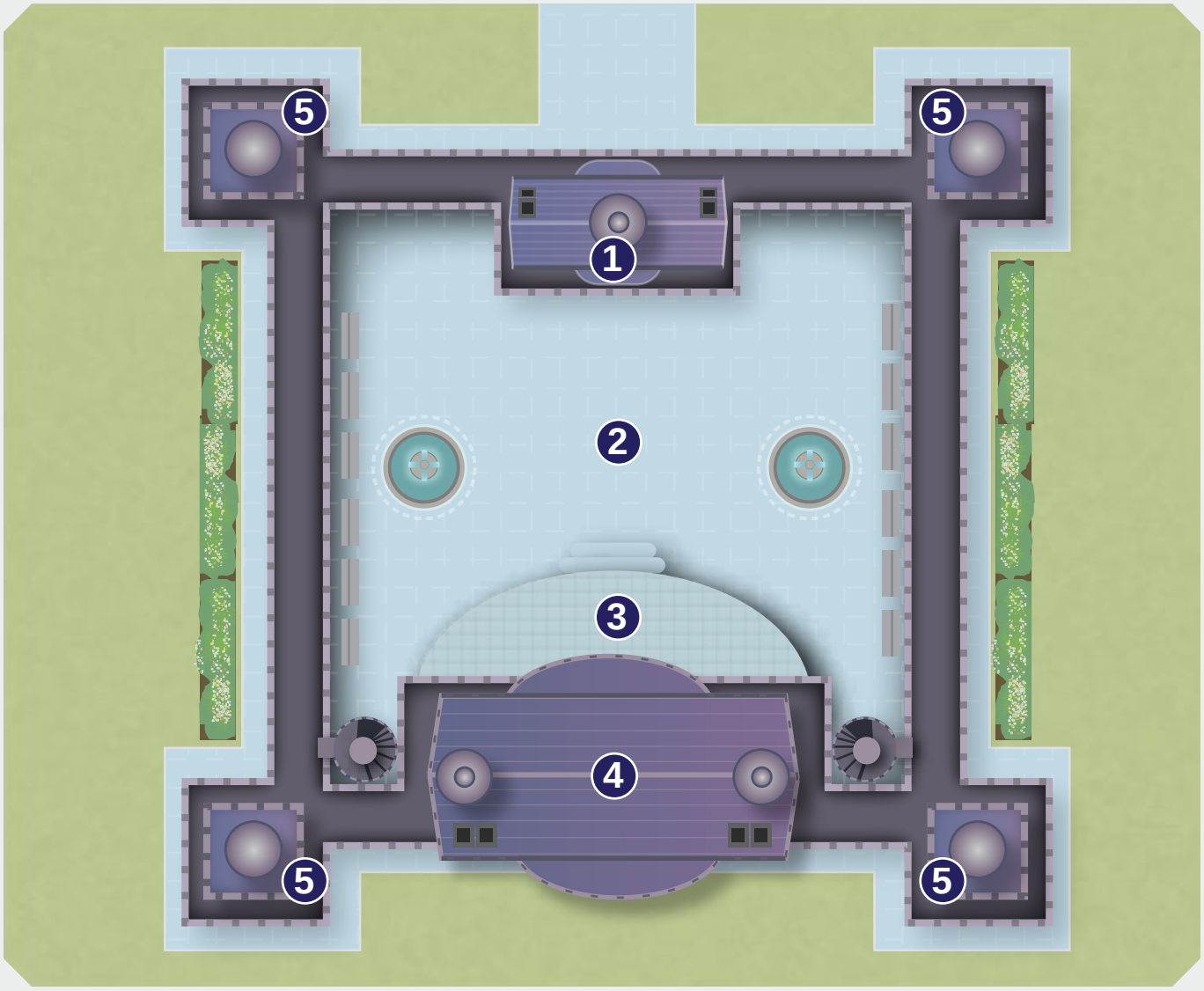
Visits to Vvrin usually involve sightseeing of the beautiful and rugged Archanni Coast on the main continent, hunting in the equatorial rainforests, or safaris on the edges of its large deserts, where most of the world's native life is. This visit is a bit different. Most of the passengers aboard the *Ventura Fortuna* plan to watch the knighthood ceremony, to be conducted on the steps of the government palace by Duke Otorre, with Baron R'chandi and five members of the Vvrin Prime Council, its ruling governmental body.

After formal introductions, the knight-to-be and their retinue – presumably Captain Eilerfaust, the Travellers and selected members of the crew and passenger roster – report to the bailey of the palace for the ceremony.

The mood is celebratory and the weather is beautiful, which is not always the case on Vvrin. The planet is tidally locked to its red-dwarf star, so daylight is always the same at the palace. Vvrin is known for its strong convection currents that blow from the hot side of the planet to the dark cold side. The twilight zone in between, where most of the population resides, is caught in the middle, experiencing freakishly strong storms. The day of the knighting is a lucky one, devoid of bad weather. However, a storm of another kind is brewing, one that is about to sweep up the Travellers in a melodramatic fury.

After the procession into the palace grounds, Duke Otorre announces the particulars, his voice amplified so everyone in the bailey can hear.

Key	Description
1	Foyer. Blocked by palace guards who prevent the intruding parties from entering the bailey.
2	Bailey. The central courtyard of the government palace where the knighting ceremony occurs.
3	Steps and stage. The ceremony is held on the stage at the top step.
4	Administrative offices.
5	Battlements and towers. If claimants can make their way to the battlements in time, they can stake their claims.



Good afternoon citizens of Chant. Today we have the great honour of bestowing a title to a new member of the rank nobility. At the behest of the Archduke of Sylea, Emperor Strephon Aella Alkhalikoi…

Just as the ceremony is getting underway, a disturbance is heard in the foyer. Have the Travellers make an Average (8+) Recon check to take notice. If any of the Travellers ask what the disturbance is, one of the guards simply says '*Claimants*'. If pressed, another guard tells them, *'They want to stake a claim to the patent. If they get to the battlement before the ceremony is complete, they get to have their say. Those are the rules.'*

Two claimants have come to attempt to stop the ceremony; one with an entourage of armed bodyguards and one all by herself.

The former is Levi Shaaraanan, scion of Count Olecraz Shaaraanan of Shaaram (Core 1833, D564974-8). Young Levi is desperate for a title, any title, and he is not patient enough to wait for his father to expire. The Shaaraanan family is a distant offshoot of the Lentulis, the second dynasty of the Imperium, and each bears the Lentulis' defining characteristic: longevity. Levi is 56 and his father is 78 but his grandfather is 126 and still kicking. The grandfather abdicated the county of Shaaram to his son but the father has no intention of doing so. Therefore, if Levi wants to become a noble, he can either wait a century or lay claim to an open patent. Levi never showed much motivation to seek a title for himself until recently. It is believed that his father, Count Shaaraanan, is the prime motivator for Levi's newfound ambition. For more on Count Shaaraanan and his schemes, see Conflict on Kamodoo on page 87.

The other party crasher is Laza Holborn, of the Anther (Core 2221, A300697-E) Holborns, wealthy businesspeople who made their money the old-fashioned way… by building a semi-legitimate, reputedly corrupt, import-export business. Laza, however, has been shielded from the unsavoury aspects of the family business and has spent her life honing her swordsmanship and hoping to bring honour to her family by winning medals in the Core Olympics and (hopefully) rising into the noble classes. She has been waiting for a moment like this for some time.

It is the custom of Chant to allow contestants to dispute the assignment of noble patents if they feel they have just cause. To stake a claim, one must make their case before the knighthood ceremony is completed; otherwise, they are too late and their claim is forfeit. This unusual custom is called an honour challenge. Most ceremonies go unchallenged but today there are not one but *two* claimants for the title that the Traveller was just recently bestowed.

The Travellers may attempt to prevent the claimants from posting their claims. If they can stop them in fair but non-lethal combat, the ceremony may then proceed to its conclusion, the claimants are denied, and the patent is awarded as originally planned. All they must do is intercept the claimants before they reach the battlements, a process which typically takes about a minute (10 combat rounds). Spiral stairwells to the upper floors are located to the left and right of the administrative offices, shown on the map. The contestants must therefore cross the courtyard, climb the stairwells and stake their claims atop the battlements.

Preventing Levi Shaaraanan from reaching the battlements requires the Travellers to get past his five unarmed – but pugilistically skilled – bodyguards. Levi himself is a poor combatant and will give up if the Travellers can defeat his bodyguards in unarmed combat.

Stopping Laza is another story altogether. She draws her sword and uses it to skilfully ward off the Travellers as she ascends the spiral staircase. Laza is a swordmaster, a medal-winning Olympic fencer, so getting past the tip of her rapier is no small task.

If the Travellers prevent both parties from reaching the battlements, the ceremony proceeds, as described in A Vacant Post on page 71. Keep in mind that either or both of these contests could prove lethal for one side or the other but both Levi and Laza will yield if it appears they cannot proceed. If the Travellers are prepared to deliver a coup de grâce on one or both of the claimants, allow a palace guard or other witness to intervene on the behalf of the defeated party. Neither Levi nor Laza will intentionally kill an opponent.

Should the Travellers fail to stop the claimants before they reach the battlements, each loudly stakes their claim, hollering into the bailey, thereby stopping the ceremony.

SHAARAANAN'S CLAIM

I claim the knightly patent in the name of the Lentuli Dynasty! My father, the Count of Shaaram, shares the blood of Emperor Artemsus and, by dynastic right, I demand to have my claim considered over that of this… unqualified interloper!

LAZA'S CLAIM

I demand restitution by the code duello of Chant. It is an insult to see a foreigner granted a fiefdom when a claimant of Antherian blood is present. I ask Your Grace, Duke Chant, to grant me trial by combat. Let my sword clash with that of the foreigner to determine who is fit to own the patent.

RIGHT OF COMBAT OR WEIGHT OF DECLARATION

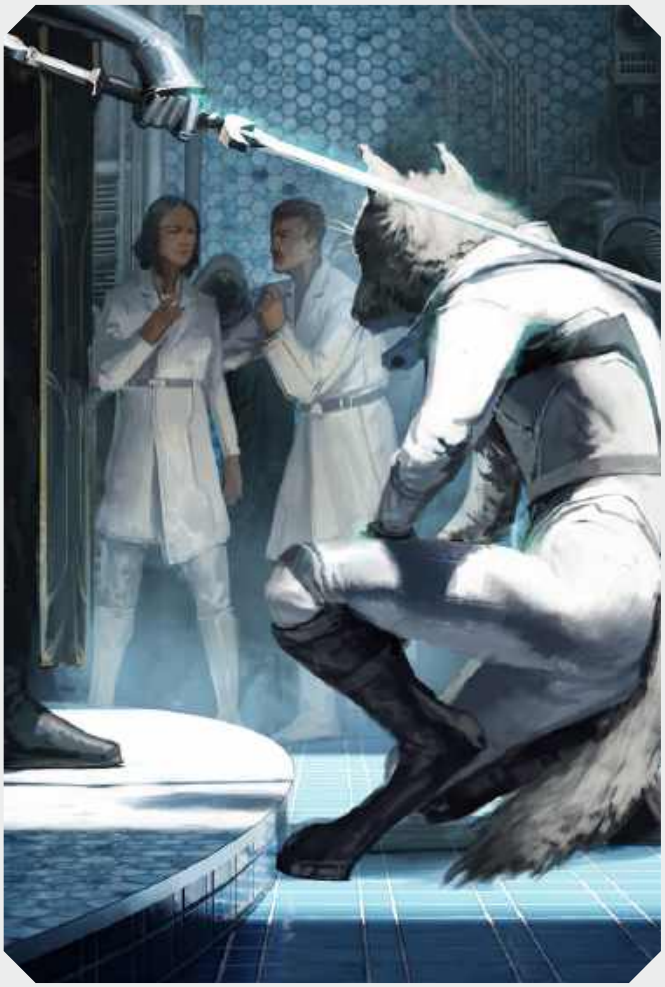
Duke Otorre sighs, vexed at the interruption, and mutters something about 'barbarity' and reforms being needed. If asked, he gives a curt smile and informs the Travellers that unfortunately, he cannot intervene in local customs. He does say that late challenges like this are rare, especially two of them.

The Duke, a member of the Vvrin court, or a noble passenger of the *Ventura Fortuna* can inform the Travellers of their rights in this contest. The knight-to-be and the Travellers may answer these challenges by *right of combat* or *weight of declaration*. As the named recipient of the title, they have the right to choose the method of contest, potentially overruling the claimants. The first is self-explanatory and the second is proving that one's claim has superior merit, usually by citing legality, precedent or superior lineage.

As a Lentuli, Shaaraanan has a viable claim to the title, so challenge by weight of declaration is risky, requiring a successful Very Difficult (12+) Advocate check (1D x 10 minutes, EDU). There is no intuitive way for the Travellers to know this but Shaaraanan is a poor duellist, so a skilled combatant can defeat him with either pistols or swords. If the newly ennobled Traveller selects right of combat, Levi will not retract his claim but it will give him pause. Shaaraanan requests to instal a champion in his stead, which is only allowable if the Traveller consents to do the same. Otherwise, he must personally duel the Traveller. See Pistols or Swords at Dawn for duelling weapons on page 69 and Duellists on page 70 for a list of available champions.

As for the other claimant, attempting to duel Laza the expert swordswoman could be disastrous. She can slice a block of cheese into eight equal pieces with three skilful strokes. However, her claim is the more dubious of the two and a successful Average (8+) Advocate check (1D x 10 minutes, EDU) will expose its flaws and eliminate her claim.

Simply accepting the challenge to duel is an option as well. If the Traveller does so, proceed to Code Duello. Duelling Laza is simple. She even brought her own favourite lanthanum-laced rapier. She is prepared to conduct the duel right there and then if the Traveller is up for it. Shaaraanan, on the other hand, will consult with one of his bodyguards, who offers to schedule the duel later in the month, either at Farhome or Shaaram, the Traveller's choice. Alternatively, the Traveller may press to have the duel more immediately, which Shaaraanan will be forced to accept.



CODE DUELLO

Duelling is an ancient tradition that hails back to the customs of medieval Terra, in which nobles who offended each other resorted to trial by combat to resolve a grievance. Duelling is much the same in the Third Imperium, with three possible causes:

- Minor offence – A disagreement between two nobles that cannot be resolved through legal or other means.
- Personal insult – One noble has grievously insulted another. The duel cannot be concluded until the offending party has apologised to the injured party, or one of them has been injured or killed in combat.
- Martial offence – One noble, or noble household, has physically attacked that of another noble, resulting in violence. This might be the heads of the two households, their children, or members of their household troops (a.k.a., Huscarles) exchanging fire or other violence.

If the duelling parties agree, the duel may be conducted using champions. Each side selects a professional duellist to represent their interests against the other. In some cases, the duel may be between two champions, one for each side. In others, a champion may duel against the injured or offending party.

Duellists select a second, a trusted friend or family member, who then works with the other party's second to determine the details of the duel or to select an umpire to adjudicate. Weapons, location, limitations, permitted defences and so on are determined either by the seconds or the umpire.

The practice of duelling in the Imperium is frowned upon, seen as a barbaric remnant of a less civilised age. For this reason, they are usually conducted with minimal fanfare and little publicity from either side. Duels are usually carried out to first blood, unconsciousness, or some other indicator, but rarely to the death. The weapons used are usually melee weapons but low-impact slug throwers may be used as well. Such weapons are usually designed to inflict injury without causing death. Duellists might also agree to armour vital body parts to prevent catastrophic injury.

Chant has its own code duello – its duelling code – which differs from other subsectors and regions of the Core. In most of the sector, duels are highly frowned upon and rarely occur unless all other avenues for conflict resolution have been exhausted. In Chant, duels are markedly more frequent and often considerably more violent, although killing is still to be avoided.

The escalated level of contentiousness in Chant often borders on outright nastiness between some of the noble houses. Duelling is just one form of violence enacted upon one another. Small private wars have occurred between the house troops of various noble families. The reasons for this are complex but among them are the proximity to Capital, the impoverishment of the subsector, competition over limited resources and feuding between old families with centuries-old grudges against one another, some of which date back to the post-Chanestin era when members of the defeated Chanestin Kingdom were given noble fiefs to placate them. In the post-war era, most of the region was in ruins, its worlds' economies in shambles. Granting fiefs on depressed, war-ravaged worlds was a bit like saying, 'You made this mess. You clean it up!' Almost a millennium later, the subsector has made only marginal improvements.

The two parties claiming injury in this situation do so based on the selection process. Because the Emperor allowed a committee to select the patent recipient, both feel that they have been unjustly overlooked. While they have no personal issue with the Traveller knight-to-be, their claims posit that they are the victims of a minor offence, one which can only be rectified by duelling.

PISTOLS OR SWORDS AT DAWN

Acceptable weapons for this duel are ceremonial pistols or rapiers, or some combination of the two. Statistics for both are listed below.

Ceremonial Duelling Pistol: A lightweight, one-shot pistol with a low-impact, typically non-penetrating round.

Weapon	TL	Range	Damage	Kg	Cost	Magazine	Traits
Ceremonial Duelling Pistol	8	10	1D+2	1	Cr2000	5	—

The rapier from the *Central Supply Catalogue* will suffice for the traditional duelling sword of the Chant Code Duello.

DUELLISTS

Should the Travellers or their challengers opt to appoint a champion, the following professional champions are currently available on Vvrin.

THE CHAMPION OF CH'NAAR

TRAITS			—	SKILLS
STR	13	INT	5	Athletics (strength) 3, Gun Combat (slug) 2, Melee (blade) 2, Melee (unarmed) 4, Stealth 2
DEX	9	EDU	4	
END	12	SOC	8	

The Champion is a big brute of a man whose physical abilities and hand-to-hand combat skills make him ideal for contests of strength and pugilism.

THE LAST HONOURABLE DUELLIST

TRAITS			—	SKILLS
STR	10	INT	8	Athletics (dexterity) 3, Carouse 2, Diplomat 2, Gun Combat (slug) 3, Melee (blade) 3, Recon 1
DEX	12	EDU	7	
END	8	SOC	8	
WEAPONS	Rapier (2D)			

This duellist is deadly with all weapons but prefers her sharp rapier, with which she is quite lethal. She fights honourably and eschews the use of augments. She will play fairly regardless, possibly even tilting towards her opponent to give them a fair chance... before she overwhelms them with her superior combat skills.

A GENTLEMAN MOST FOUL

TRAITS			—	SKILLS
STR	8 (17)	INT	9	Athletics (dexterity) 2, Deception 3, Gun Combat (slug) 3, Melee (blade) 2, Melee (unarmed) 3, Recon 1, Stealth 2
DEX	12 (13)	EDU	10	
END	8	SOC	8	
AUGMENTS	Muscular Bridging (STR+1, DEX+1, Movement +3m), Subdermal Armour (+4), combat Arm (STR 16), Enhanced Vision, Neural Jack, all enhanced with Invisitech			

While he presents himself as an honourable duellist he is anything but, concealing several augments with Invisitech technology and his own deceptive skills. He is sneaky and underhanded in combat and will do whatever he deems necessary to win for his client, even if it means cheating.

A VACANT POST

Dame Vahnya Naud Idistriy, the previous knight of Farhome (Core 1929, E628544-7), has recently died. Idistriy was a bit of an eccentric, a collector of art and antiquities from the far reaches of the Imperium. Upon her death, per her instructions, her manor and all her valuable collection were burned in an enormous funeral pyre, no easy task on a low-technology world with a very thin atmosphere.

With her finances in shambles and most of her staff laid off over the past several years, only her butler remained to carry out her instructions. Rumour has it he conducted a secret auction to sell off some of the most valuable pieces, giving him an ample retirement. No one has seen him since the solemn and poorly attended ceremony.

At least... that is the *official* story.

The long and short of it is there is no stately manor awaiting our newly knighted Traveller. If they desire a residence on the planet, sadly, they must build a new one.

The selection process that has awarded the Traveller with the knighthood is shrouded in mystery. The process by which vacant patents are awarded can be a bit byzantine. Officially, they are granted by the Archduke of the Domain, which in this case is the Domain of Sylea whose Archduke is also the Emperor. For this noble patent, a mysterious 'advisory council' became involved and the Archduke – or Emperor in this case – merely signed the patent after the selection had been made.

COMPLETING THE CEREMONY

If the Travellers are able to resolve the situation and negotiate their way out of duelling – or simply win a duel – then the duke brings them back to the dais and hastily completes the ceremony, perhaps concerned that more contenders will arrive.

At the behest of the Archduke of Sylea, Emperor Strephon Aella Alkhalikoi, I do hereby knight thee into the Honourable Order of Chant.

The duke's chamberlain places a ribbon around the Traveller's neck, hanging from which is a medallion featuring a blue Imperial Sunburst. The duke then touches each of the Traveller's shoulders with a ceremonial sabre and concludes with

Arise knight and be recognised. You are now [Dame or Lord followed by the Traveller's name], a knight of the rank nobility. Your fiefdom shall be the Farhome system, four parsecs to rimward in the great subsector of Chant.

The crowd gasps at the announcement that the fief is on Farhome and people murmur among themselves until the duke silences them to complete the ceremony. After the Travellers have a moment to check their portable computer devices to examine Farhome's profile and library data, the excitement might wear off when they see that Farhome is a backwater world, perhaps the most underdeveloped system in the region. It seems that knighthood might be less glamourous than originally expected. However, multiple parties from elsewhere in the Core have vied for the fief that has been granted to the Traveller and the duke himself indicated that it is unusual for that to happen. Perhaps there is some value to it after all, although just what that might be remains a mystery at this point.

TRAVELLING TO FARHOME

The Travellers might want to visit Farhome to learn more about the system's mysterious valuation. If they do not opt to go there, the adventure can still run its course but a great many mysteries will have to be solved by other means.

Arranging such a visit depends on the status of the campaign, principally whether Captain Eilerfaust has revealed that he is Naalir's avatar and that they have a greater mission in the Core than simply guiding a cruise ship. If the CI has informed them of their greater mission as described in Moment of Truth on page 19, then the Travellers have access to the *Velos tis Alitheia*, the stealth scout ship in the ventral breakaway slot of the *Ventura Fortuna*. If the Travellers do not yet know about the secret ship, then they can still go to Farhome but it will require a unanimous vote among the passengers to take an excursion there, which is no small feat. Farhome has an abysmal starport, far below the standards required to host a luxury liner. However, if advance preparations are made, it *can* be done.

Subsidised liners have no fuel purification plants and are therefore required to visit only systems with a Class A or B starport, unless they can make purified fuel available at a suboptimal target system by other means. Captain Eilerfaust can arrange this but it will come out of the profits for the cruise. Multiply the cost of a full tank of fuel by four (Cr364000) and extract that amount from the profits. The captain must contract several fuel lighters to jump to Farhome and deploy an orbital fuel station – basically just a portable fuel bladder – from which they can refill. Such stations are vulnerable to micrometeorites, piracy and other hazards, so once deployed, the *Ventura Fortuna* should make its jump and refuelling operation post haste.

Alternatively, if the Travellers are using the *Velos tis Alitheia*, they can jump to Farhome in secret from Prubisk, conduct an operation and rejoin the *Ventura Fortuna* at Kamodoo. The liner will operate at a reduced capability of jump-1, necessitating a stop at Basilling, but with its Class A starport, this poses no operational problems. Captain Eilerfaust and his crew can make it a bonus port-of-call, which is a common occurrence on many cruises. This can give the Travellers up to two weeks on Farhome to accomplish whatever they want to do while the cruise passengers spend their time on Prubisk and Basilling.

LIBRARY DATA

Farhome system data is available in the ship's Library program or by accessing local data networks on Vvrin. Like any data, the content may be somewhat inaccurate or out of date given the limitations of jump-carried mail, especially for a world like Farhome that receives fewer visitors than most. The only way to get the latest information is to physically go there. If the Travellers search for it, the Referee may provide the following information.

Farhome is a failing world, evidenced by its poor quality starport, declining population and low Tech Level. This world was the site of a Solomani Colony that collapsed during the Long Night and a second colony that was established in 667. The second got off to a fair start, exploiting untapped resources of both the mainworld and the system's two planetoid belts, Winsome Belt and Stoneyard. Poor planning and subsequent financial struggles have slowly and painfully choked any prospects for success that the colony might have had. Those still living on the mainworld have become destitute. Many among the struggling population dream of finding a way off Farhome but some descendants of the original colonists remain, living out a bleak and pointless existence.

One notable export from Farhome is its music industry. The world has fostered folk music genres, most of which call attention to the plight of its people and, by extension, those of the subsector's many suffering populations.

In addition, the system has two relatively prosperous planetoid belts, the inner of which is called Winsome Belt. It is the richest of the two and mostly populated by homegrown Belters. Stoneyard, the outermost belt, is home to a large immigrant community, most of whom hail from Traa. The two distinct communities have developed clans that come into conflict with each other. Planetoid belts do not confine themselves to distinct orbits around their stars and the two belts of Farhome are more diffuse than most, intersecting with each other at thousands of points, causing 'territorial' conflicts. Nevertheless, the clans have successfully built starports and other facilities that transcend those of the mainworld.

If the *Ventura Fortuna* is limited to jump-1, the crew *must* reunite at Basilling. Because of its starport travel limitations, the liner is blocked from proceeding alone the route by Farhome with its Class D starport. However, if the liner retains the *Velos tis Alitheia* in its breakaway hull, it still has its full jump capacity and may proceed to Kamodoo where the Travellers can reunite with the ship.

If the Travellers do not yet know about the *Velos tis Alitheia*, and they still seek to visit Farhome, they will require a fast packet or other ship with a minimum jump-2 capability. Perhaps the new knight can wield their newly acquired influence in the region to secure transportation.

FARHOME

Travelling to Farhome provides an opportunity to view the fief first hand and determine why the system has such value in spite of appearances. Like any star system, there are limitless things to see and places to visit but the Travellers will most likely be drawn to the mainworld.

SPACE ENCOUNTER

Upon arrival in the system, the Travellers witness a brazen act of piracy, something that typically does not happen in the Core. They see a modified far trader in the process of running down a seeker in close orbit of the planet. The far trader, dubbed the *Marie Elise*, has Thrust 2, is armed with a double pulse laser and has a slightly larger, more powerful power plant to support the weapon but other than that it is like other far traders.

The *Marie Elise* successfully used a false Signal GK to dupe the seeker's pilot into believing that it required assistance, waiting until it came close to fire upon the smaller ship. However, the deft seeker pilot has thus far avoided major damage and is calling for help. The Travellers may provide assistance.

Should they successfully aid the seeker, have him hail from one of the two planetoid belts in the system: Winsome Belt or Stoneyard. If they successfully defeat or frighten off the *Marie Elise*, the Travellers make an ally among the clans. The operators of the seeker are a wife-and-husband team, Rawley and Brenk Teznan. This connection can serve them later when the clan conflict becomes central to the story.

PLANETFALL

Farhome has no highport but it does possess a limited downport located on the outskirts of the capital city of Silvany. It is capable of hosting approximately 800 tons of spacecraft. When the Travellers land, there is one other ship present: a seeker. There are no refuelling facilities and the starport is inconveniently located several hundred kilometres from the nearest body of water. Wilderness refuelling from the world's oceans and lakes is not prohibited, so visitors may avail themselves of these resources.

Silvany is the only major city on Farhome, home to about half the world's population. Offworlders refer to natives of Farhome as 'Farhomians' but locals scoff at that term. They refer to themselves simply as 'Homies'. The city is surrounded by dozens of feeder communities and untold hundreds of smaller habitations across the surface of the planet, including at least one seasteader community making its home on a defunct petrochemical extraction platform along the east coast of the main continent.

Most of Farhome's population is xenophobic, shunning outsiders like the plague. They are not primitives but are fully aware that they have been born to a meagre inheritance, and they do not much care for foreigners who come to see their misery. The people of Silvany are perhaps less xenophobic than most but offworlders can expect to be harassed by the locals there, who will call them 'sackies', an epithet from the local dialect whose meaning has been lost in the annals of time. Suffice it to say it is not meant to flatter.

The lives of the locals can best be described as destitute. The local government has all but collapsed and offworld support has dwindled to a trickle, mostly from a few charitable organisations on neighbouring star systems. The Travellers witness people eking out a hardscrabble existence, collecting salvage for recycling and repurposing, a few paltry resource-extraction operations and begging on the streets. While the local government lays claim to Law Level 4, there is no official police, leaving the task of keeping order to a few overworked militias whose primary occupation is to protect government buildings and the land holdings of the world's few financial elites.

Regardless of the obvious impediments, the Travellers might want to make a foray into the city to learn the latest rumours. Make a Difficult (10+) Streetwise check (1D hours, INT) with any SOC modifier serving as a negative DM. For example, if the Traveller has SOC 9, their DM+1 becomes DM-1, reflecting an extreme level of class resentment. If they notice the difficulty they have breaking through the xenophobia, the Travellers may disguise themselves as locals by making an Average (8+) Art (performance) or Deception check, which will negate any negative DMs they incur. The Effect of this check serves as a positive DM for subsequent Streetwise checks. Upon a successful check, have the Travellers roll 1D and check the Farhome Rumours table.

Farhome Rumours

1D	Result	Referee's Note
1	Downsizing at the statehouse. Thousands of Credits worth of furniture and computer equipment was sold off at the statehouse recently.	Just a sign of how bad things are when the government starts pawning off its wares.
2	Muckety mucks from Winsome Belt recently met with Farhome government leaders for secret talks.	Local government officials have been paid off to destabilise the belter communities. They are feeding them disinformation to ensure conflict between the clans.
3	A mob ransacked a hydroponics centre, followed by two copycat incidents.	The people are getting desperate and lashing out although actions like this harm the lower classes the most.
4	Cinch and Eventide, two of the largest inhabited planetoids of the belts are coming into close proximity to each other. There could be trouble between the opposed clan elements that live within them.	Cinch is in Winsome Belt, Eventide is in Stoneyard. The last time they came close, there was an exchange of fire between them. See The Belts and What They Portendon page 79.
5	The death of the previous Imperial knight, Dame Idistriy, was said to be of natural causes followed by the arson of her manor. Some locals believe she was assassinated.	Perhaps a visit to the grounds is in order. See Farhome Keep on page 75.
6	Offworlders are rare but a few months ago, an armed group arrived, rented ATVs from a landlord and went into the outback, never to be seen or heard from again.	Operatives of the Count of Shaaram, sent to ensure no evidence of wrongdoing could be found at Idistriy Manor. They were later evacuated by ship's boat.

FOREIGN INTERFERENCE

Count Olecraz Shaaraanan of Shaaram has placed an infiltration team in-system whose multi-talented operatives are there to disrupt Farhome from changing its status quo. There is movement afoot to improve things on the planet and Shaaram would prefer that things stay the same. The operatives have been in deep cover in the system for some time and are responsible for several of the rumours the Travellers may have heard. Just why the count has so much invested in restraining Farhome is yet to be revealed. However, the following account will show the lengths that he... and his ally, the Duchess of Aursis... are willing to go to achieve their objectives.

The Shaarami team came to the system, bribed local officials to misinform the public, drove into the outback in rented ATVs, assassinated Dame Idistriy and then split up. Two members of the team are maintaining surveillance on the keep from several kilometres away and they maintain control of the hunter-killer robots there. The remainder of the team are en route to Ogn-2211, a rogue asteroid desired by the people of both of the system's belts. They intend to carry out an operation there that is described in False Flag Claim Jumpers on page 81.

Shaaram Operatives
STR 7 DEX 8 END 8
AOC (spies and assassins) 2

Ground Team: Autopistol (3D-3), Assault Rifle (3D, Auto 2), Flak Shell (+8), Pressure Sleeve
Shipboard Team: Snub Pistol (3D-3, Zero-G), Accelerator Rifle (3D, Zero-G)

Note: In addition, the operatives include a few members with shipboard skills to operate the seeker that they are using for the operation described in False Flag Claim Jumpers on page 81. Assign Pilot (spacecraft) 1, Engineer (j-drive) 1, Astrogation 1 and Gunner (turret) 2 to four of the operatives.

FARHOME KEEP

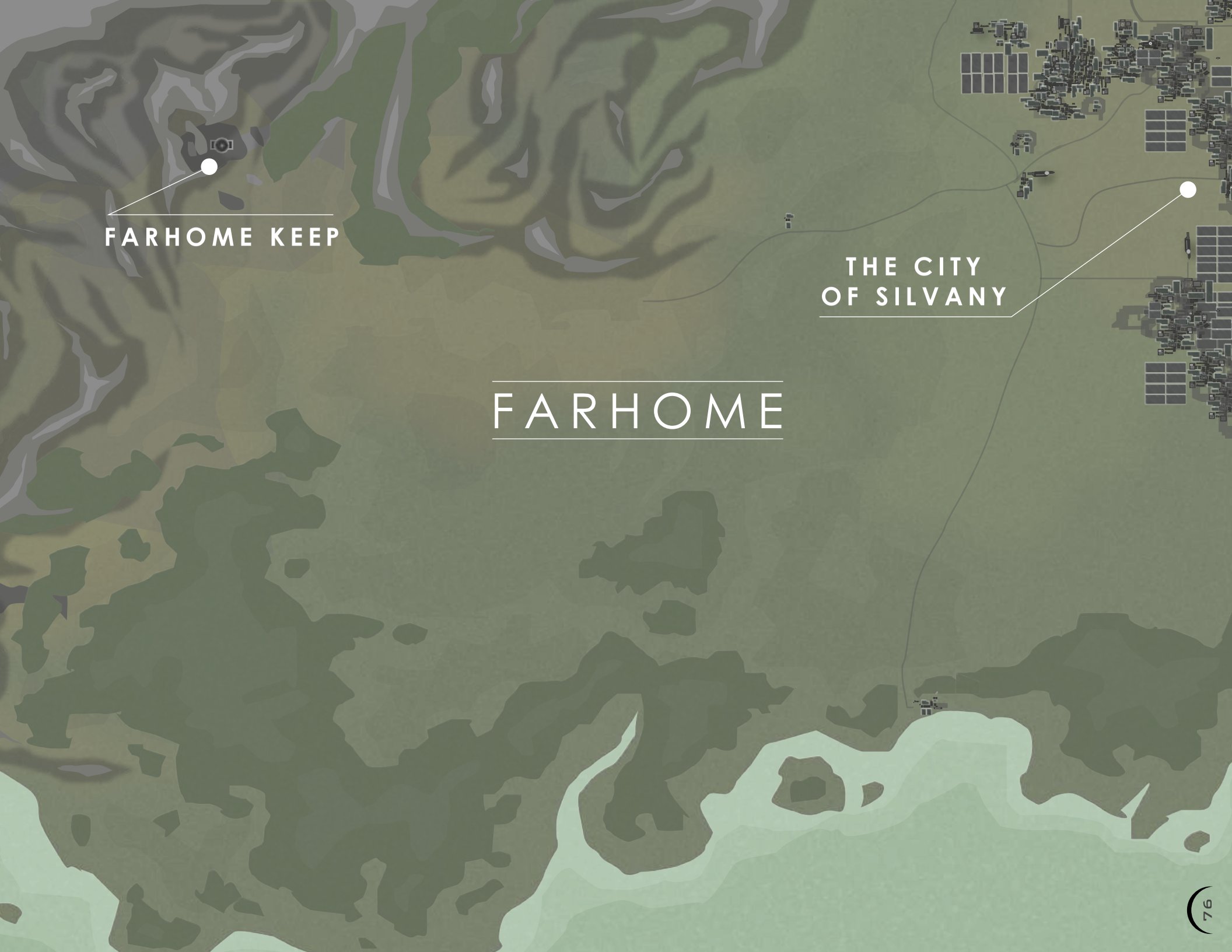
If the Travellers ask about the burned down manor of the previous knight, they are met with a variety of responses. Some locals disparage her, saying that she got what she had coming. '*She never did anything for us Homies! Good riddance!*' Others have a more nuanced view, believing that even if she *had* wanted to help the inhabitants of Farhome, her hands were largely tied. She was a lowly knight, managing a system that the Imperium would just as soon forget. Regardless of the locals' response to the inquiry, all of them know where the manor was and can give the Travellers' directions to it.

The drive out to the manor is over rough territory. Most of the journey can be made by wheeled or tracked vehicle as long as it has the ATV trait. Such vehicles can be rented from the landlords but if they want to keep a low profile, there are lesser members of society who might be able to rent them an SUV or several small ATVs. Farhome does not support indigenous life, so there will be no threat of an animal encounter en route. However, halfway through the journey, the roads are no longer paved, so the Referee may insert events to reflect difficult travel, especially if the Travellers rent a poor-quality vehicle.

Alternatively, they could fly to the site in an air/raft or their ship but there is little space to land a large vehicle or starship.

When they arrive at the site, they see that its structure has been almost completely destroyed, leaving only a few remnants of its frame and foundation. Close investigation might reveal that there were actually *two* fires – one that appears to have been several months ago and a far more recent one to finish the job. Why someone felt it necessary to come all the way out to a burned manor to *re-destroy* it is a mystery. Have the Travellers make an Average (8+) Investigate (1D hours, INT) check to determine that there were two fires.

There is not much left to see unless they use advanced sensory equipment to thoroughly investigate the site. If they came to Farhome using the *Velos tis Alitheia*, its sensor package includes a densitometer that can reveal more information. Make an Average (8+) Electronics (sensors) check (1D x 10 minutes, EDU) to use the sensors to find a hidden trove three metres below the burned-out foundation, just below where the hearth had been. If they do not have the scout ship nor a portable densitometer, then they might still be able to find evidence of the hidden trove by means of a task chain, using some combination of Investigate, Science


FARHOME KEEP
THE CITY OF SILVANY
FARHOME

(geology, planetology or similar) and a Difficult (10+) Recon check. Finding the trove is a key part of the narrative, so give them the chance to discover it unless they make no attempt to properly comb the site.

The trove contains a low-tech safe that can easily be cracked with high-tech gear, perhaps incorporating Intrusion software into an appropriate check. Using a more ham-fisted approach like a laser welder will destroy the contents of the safe. If the Travellers manage to break into it by more subtle means, they discover Cr100000 in cash and several documents, including the deed to the manor and a series of official communiques from the Imperial Courier Service (adjunct to the x-boat service that serves systems off the major routes). Most of these contain mundane official communications between Dame Idistriy and members of the rank nobility on Capital but some messages reveal that the knight had a radical plan. Provide this information *only* if the Travellers bother to investigate the printed communiques.

Based on the listed dates and procedural jargon, a Traveller with the Admin skill might be able to determine that Idistriy was requesting a change of status for Farhome, hence elevating its stature and making it a target for Imperial development funds. Responses from Capital stop about a year ago but Idistriy retained copies of her repeated attempts to rekindle the conversation. In the last message receipt, Idistriy claims she is coming to Capital in person to handle the situation. The date of the message was one week before her death. The key phrase is –

There are dozens of precedents in which a system's status is changed when the population centre has moved or newcomers settle another planetary body in the same system. The Farhome belts have become vibrant communities; two have even built their own starports. It is regrettable but the centre of power has shifted to the belts and it should be acknowledged. This system deserves a barony and that can only happen if the Survey Branch alters the mainworld designation. It could be myself if Duke Otorre sees fit to promote me, or someone else, but the people of Farhome deserve this.

There are several loose ends that the Travellers might follow up on. Her butler was said to have arranged for the manor to be burned down in a grandiose 'funeral pyre' of sorts. If they could find him, they might be able to get a better sense of what happened here and whether he was involved. Going to Capital to speak with members of the Moot is unpractical but again, a Traveller with the Admin skill will know that subsector dukes, such as Duke Otorre at Vvrin, retain records of most official communications and he might have more information on what the knight was trying to accomplish.

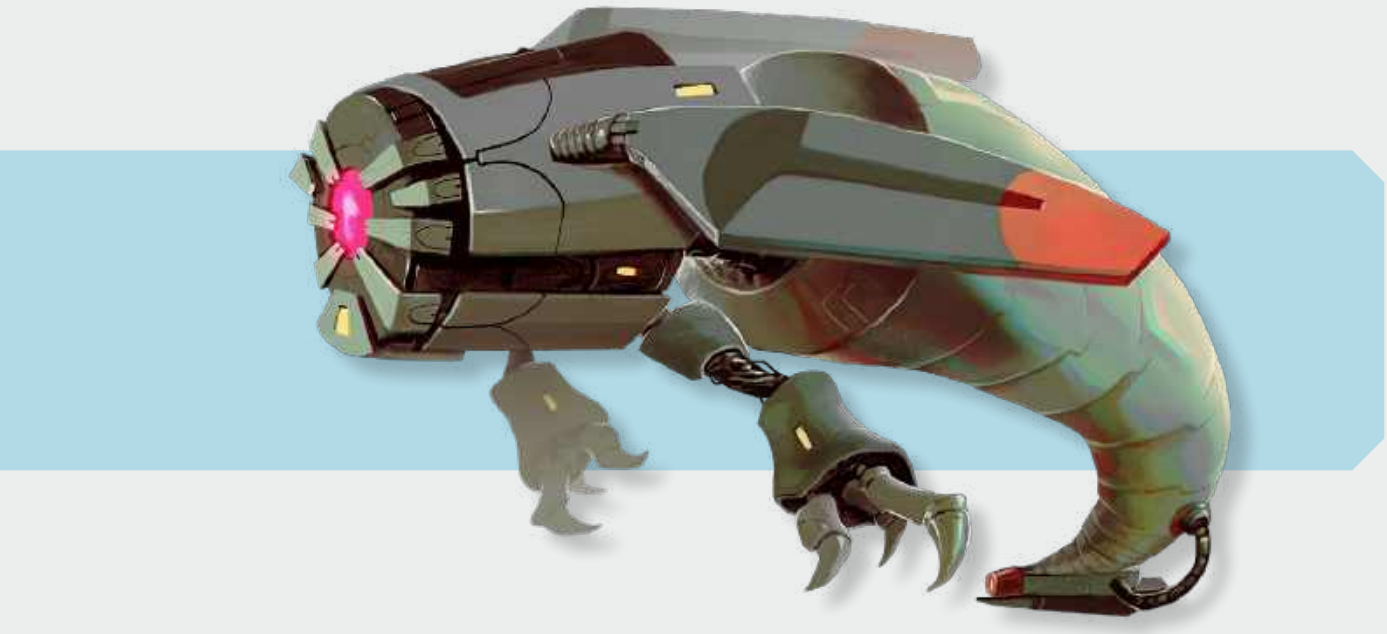
While they ponder the possibilities, they come under attack by a trio of hunter-killer robots. The robots had been dispersed around the area and approach from over the rises of multiple nearby hilltops. Their initial range is 300 metres but they travel quickly. The very thin atmosphere of Farhome does not carry sound well, so they are not likely to hear them coming, but alert Travellers can make a Recon check to see movement over one of the hilltops as the robots begin their approach. Success with Effect 2+ lets them observe multiple robots coming at them from different directions; otherwise, they are surprised by the other two. Hunter-killers are small, so they will be difficult to hit in combat.

If the Travellers are unarmed, they may retreat to their vehicle or call for help but – unless they made friends in Silvany – there is not much help to be had. They may also hide among the ruins of the manor. The hearth and other brick or concrete structures provide suitable cover. Suffice to say, someone does not want interlopers picking over the remains of the previous knight's household.

The drone operators are 10 kilometres away and may be found if the Travellers are persistent when searching for them. A scan of the area using sensors might detect that the operatives are hiding in a camouflaged advanced base (see page 122 of the *Central Supply Catalogue*). Any Electronics (sensors) or Recon checks used to find the base incur DM-2 due to the camouflage. There are two drone operators present. Use the Shaaram Operatives trivial character on page 75 to represent them.

Should the Travellers survive the attack of the hunter-killer robots, they might have their interest piqued about just what is going on at Farhome. Someone went to the effort to defend an already-destroyed manor with high-tech robots. Either someone is very protective of property that belongs to the nobility or they are trying to hide something. Whatever the case may be, the answers cannot be found on Farhome. The locals are as much in the dark as they are… unless the Travellers managed to dig up and break into the safe. If they did not, hope is not lost. They have other clues to work with if they discovered any of the rumours on page 74.

There is another party working at cross purposes with the Travellers. Finding out who they are might help the Travellers to solve the mystery.



Robot	Size	Hits	Locomotion	Speed	TL	Cost
Hunter-killer	3	8	Grav	12m	10	Cr37000
Skills	Athletics (dexterity) 1, Athletics (endurance) 2, Gun Combat (energy) 1, Recon 1, Stealth 2					
Attacks	Laser Pistol (3D, Zero-G)					
Manipulators	2x (STR 5 DEX 6)					
Endurance	36 hours					
Traits	Armour (+3), Flyer (Idle), Heightened Senses, IR Vision, Small (-2)					
Programming	Hunter/Killer (Standard), INT 4					
Options	Auditory Sensor (Broad Spectrum), Camouflage: Visual (Improved), Drone Interface, Thermal Sensor, Transceiver, 50km (Enhanced), Video Screen (Basic), Weapon Mount (Small)					

THE BUTLER DID (NOT DO) IT

No matter how hard they try, the Travellers are not able to find evidence of the butler's presence in Silvany. A full investigation might take weeks given the primitive record keeping at what passes for a starport on Farhome but even if they made the effort, they would find no trace of him. As far as the Travellers are concerned, he was either very talented at covering his tracks or he never left the planet.

In fact, he never left. The butler was killed at Idistriy manor along with the knight and his body was disposed of in the vast wilderness of the planet, about 25 kilometres from the scene of the crime. Finding the body would waylay spurious accusations about his involvement but doing so would be extremely difficult. It has been there for months and in quite bad condition. However, an ambitious group of Travellers, applying all the forensics and sensory skills at their disposal, might be able to find the body, thereby eliminating one possible culprit for the crime.

THE BELTS AND WHAT THEY PORTEND

The Farhome system has two distinct planetoid belts in consecutive orbits just a few hundredths of an AU outside the orbit of Farhome itself. When designing a star system, assigning orbits to each belt makes things neat and tidy for mapping purposes but the planetoids themselves do not completely adhere to their lanes. There are asteroids in each that wander into the other belt for periods of time due to their eccentric orbits.

Each belt is dominated by four or five large planetoids that account for about half the mass of the belt, a few of which qualify as dwarf planets; the remainder are composed of much smaller objects. The Belter population of the Farhome system has been growing rapidly for decades. A large number of M-type (metal-rich) asteroids were discovered and claimed by independent Belters, attracting immigrants from neighbouring Traa. The perception is that most valuable objects have either been claimed or tapped out in Traa, however untrue that may be. The actual reasons are more complicated and have more to do with the complexity of the claim system in Traa than resource depletion. Belters have migrated from Traa to Farhome to avoid the red tape of making claims there. In addition, the news has travelled to other nearby Belter communities, attracting more newcomers to Farhome.

Farhome's changing demographics have the potential to indirectly alter the politics of the region. The defining issue of the day in this part of the Core is the Chanestin Movement in Dunea. Twenty-five worlds in Dunea were once part of the Chanestin Kingdom, a rival of the early Third Imperium. Even after 1,000 years of Imperial membership, they maintain distinctly separate traditions and culture, and they hope to be granted a Cultural Zone, giving them limited self-government. Cultural Zone awards are rare and ultimately up to the Emperor but the opinion of the Moot is taken under serious consideration. Each noble with the rank of baron or above has a vote, weighted by their rank. Many assign or sell their votes to other nobles who then vote for them by proxy. Therefore, a single noble who collects a large number of votes can wield significant power in the Moot.

Most of the Whitestar Cluster (nine systems in rimward Chant within one parsec of each other) have traditionally been sympathetic to the Chanestin cause. Four have rank nobles of baron or above and therefore have votes in the Moot: Rhydino, Wrebil, Traa and Kamodoo. Of those, only Wrebil has sold its proxy, which is held by Traa. The potential addition of a fifth vote in the bloc is perceived as a threat to the status quo. A single additional vote sympathetic to the Chanestin cause might turn in favour of granting them a Cultural Zone. The forces against this will do anything they can to destabilise Farhome to keep it from enhancing its status.

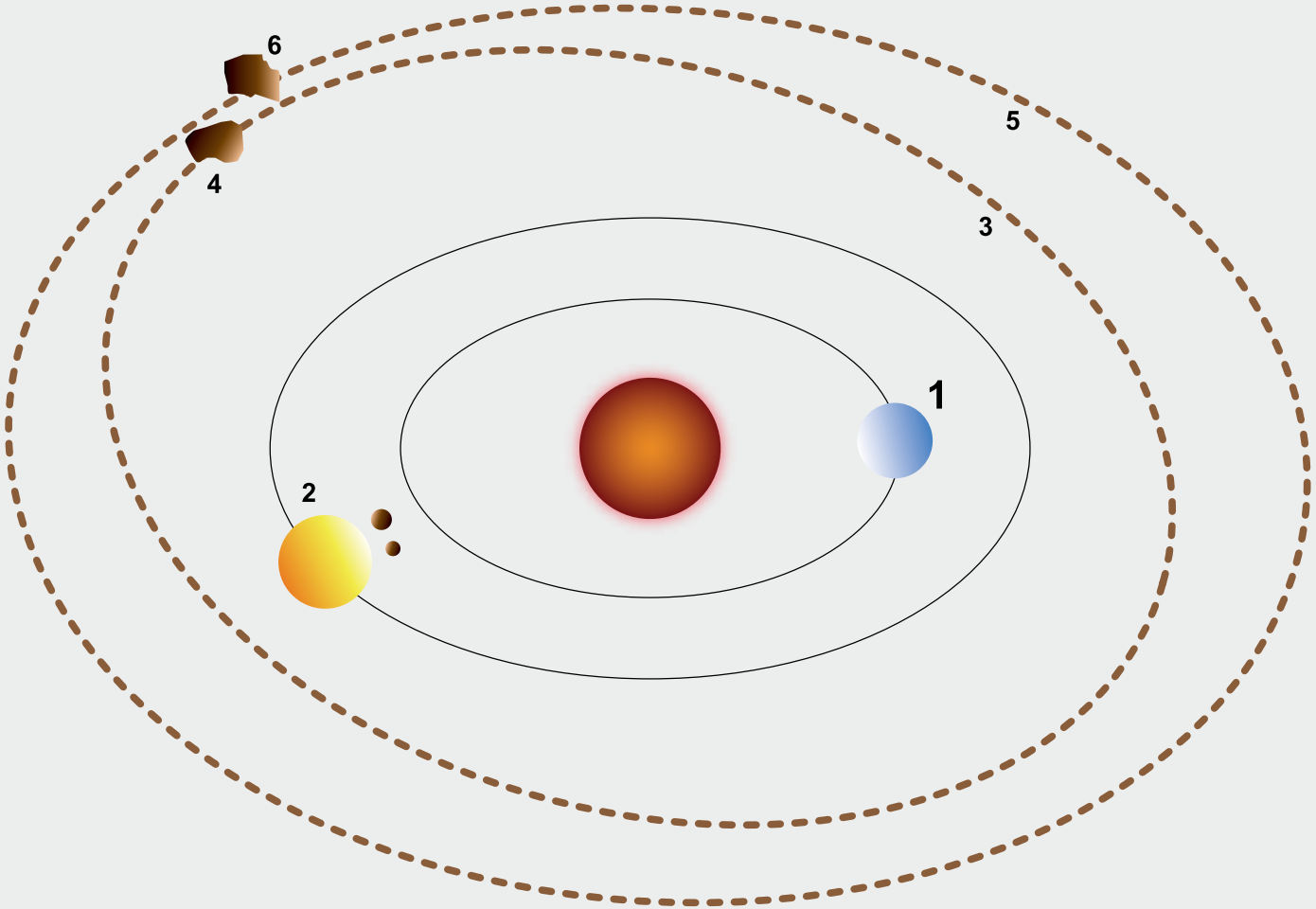
The opponents of a Chanestin Cultural Zone are Duchess Colyere of Aursis and her crony, Count Olecraz Shaaraanan of Shaaram. The Duchess has spent many years building power in Ch'naar and needs the 'bogeyman' of a Chanestin threat to justify her ambitions. Count Shaaraanan is firmly under her proverbial boot heel. She is rumoured to have information about his involvement in several corrupt schemes that would get him unseated from his noble fief. For this reason, he is a compliant lieutenant to the duchess.

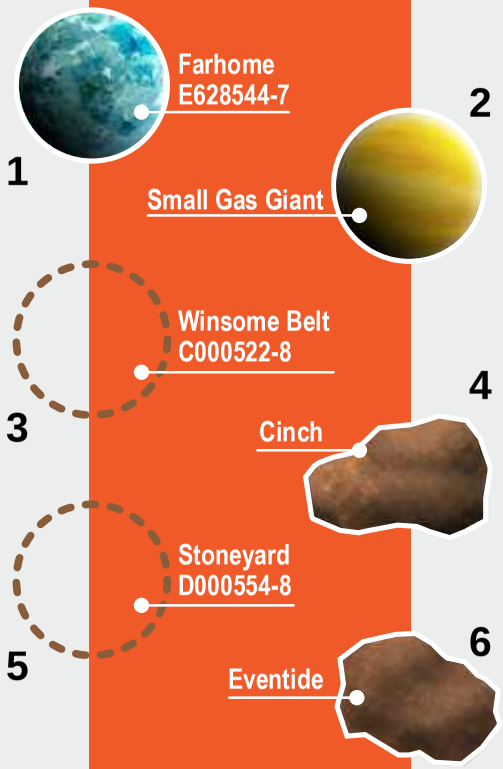
One could argue that modern Farhome has been mischaracterised by the IISS Survey Branch. Its population and starport are derived from the system mainworld which has not been a factor in the system's fortunes for centuries; the population and influence of its two planetoid belts has surpassed that of Farhome. There is a tendency to crown any habitable-zone world as the mainworld of a system, but there are examples elsewhere in which habitable-zone worlds are superseded by other planets or planetoid belts. Generally, the world with the highest population, best starport, most resources and other measurable factors is dubbed the mainworld. Such designations are important in Imperial politics because they are a determining factor in which noble rank is assigned to the system.

Given Farhome's limitations, Winsome Belt or Stoneyard are viable alternatives as the system mainworld but there are obstacles to making a change of this magnitude. The Imperium is guided by tradition and inertia. Once a system has an assigned mainworld, it is difficult to change. Tradition and stability are important in Imperial culture even when change makes more sense.

The Imperial nobility has assigned a knight to manage Farhome for the Emperor but should an auditor conduct a census of the belts and re-evaluate the system based on its economy, there is reason to believe a baronet or even a baron could be assigned to the system or the current knight could be promoted. While a knight does not vote in the Moot, a baron does.

The Farhome Inner System





M2 V Red Dwarf (Main Sequence)

To sum it up, three things need to happen for Farhome to be a factor in the fate of the Chanestin Cultural Zone:

1. The system must be redesignated as an asteroid belt, with Winsome Belt, Stoneyard or both being assigned as the system's 'mainworld'.
2. With its subsequent increase in population and value, the system must be assigned a baron in the Moot, either by promoting its current knight, or selecting a new baron from the honour noble ranks.
3. A vote for the Chanestin Cultural Zone must come to pass in the Moot.

None of this guarantees a Chanestin Cultural Zone but a vote in favour of it in the Moot might very well sway Emperor Strephon to grant it. For this reason alone, the forces opposed to the Chanestin Cause are desperately trying to prevent Farhome from changing. They do not want to take any chances that the current stalemate will end.

THE BELTER CLANS

When combined, there are over a million Belters who now prospect in Winsome Belt and Stoneyard. The profiles for the two planetoid belts would be:

Winsome Belt	C000522-8
Stoneyard	D000554-8

The two largest planetoids are Cinch and Eventide, located in Winsome Belt and Stoneyard respectively. Each may be said to be the 'capital' of its belt. Winsome Belt has been populated for about a century longer than Stoneyard, first settled after Belters made big M-type strikes. Both belts now host hundreds of thousands of people – the Belters themselves and the support structure that makes a mining industry possible.

Over the centuries, Cinch, Eventide and several other large planetoids were hollowed out and made into habitations. Most of these were dangerous, low-tech affairs, cobbled together with surplus materials taken from Farhome. The more recent incursion of immigrants from Traa has changed the demographics and brought in much-needed upgrades. Initially, newcomers were looked upon with scorn but after they began to make big strikes and the wealth was shared with the original Homies, the atmosphere became more welcoming. Unfortunately, a spirit of neighbourly love has not been established *between* the two belts. With so many untapped resources and barely explored trojan belts in the system, a great deal of animosity has developed between them. A clan-like arrangement has developed where the denizens of each belt identify as distinct social groups.

Before she died, Dame Idistriy had been making an effort to mediate disputes between the belts. Her diplomatic skills left something to be desired but – as the Travellers know if they safely cracked the safe under the manor – she knew the value of the belts and the potential they had to redefine the system and possibly reverse its fortunes. She was never able to make her case with the leaders of the two belts and therefore the current impasse remains.

Conflict rarely rises to the level of violence but incidents of vandalism and sabotage are common. Currently, the two belts are in a dispute over which has the development rights to Ogn-2211, a captured planetoid with an eccentric, off-the-ecliptic orbit that is on its way directly between the two belts. The conflict has the potential to escalate unless outsiders intervene. Had Dame Idistriy been alive, she would have arbitrated the dispute, but without Imperial representation, there is no way to tell what might happen next.

FALSE FLAG CLAIM JUMPERS

Duchess Colyere Hajesta daMae of Aursis (nine parsecs away, in the Ch'naar subsector) does not want to see a Chanestin Cultural Zone come to pass. In fact, she wants it to fail so badly that she will do just about anything, including espionage, fraud, assassination and warfare if need be. The duchess is a walking contradiction. While she pledges complete obeisance to the Emperor and the glory of the Imperium, espousing its virtues at every turn, she also flouts its rules regularly. In Farhome, her agents have prepared a false-flag claim jump to stir up aggression between the belts. The duchess believes that instability in the system will prevent the Imperium from considering a designation change and, therefore, the advent of a barony.

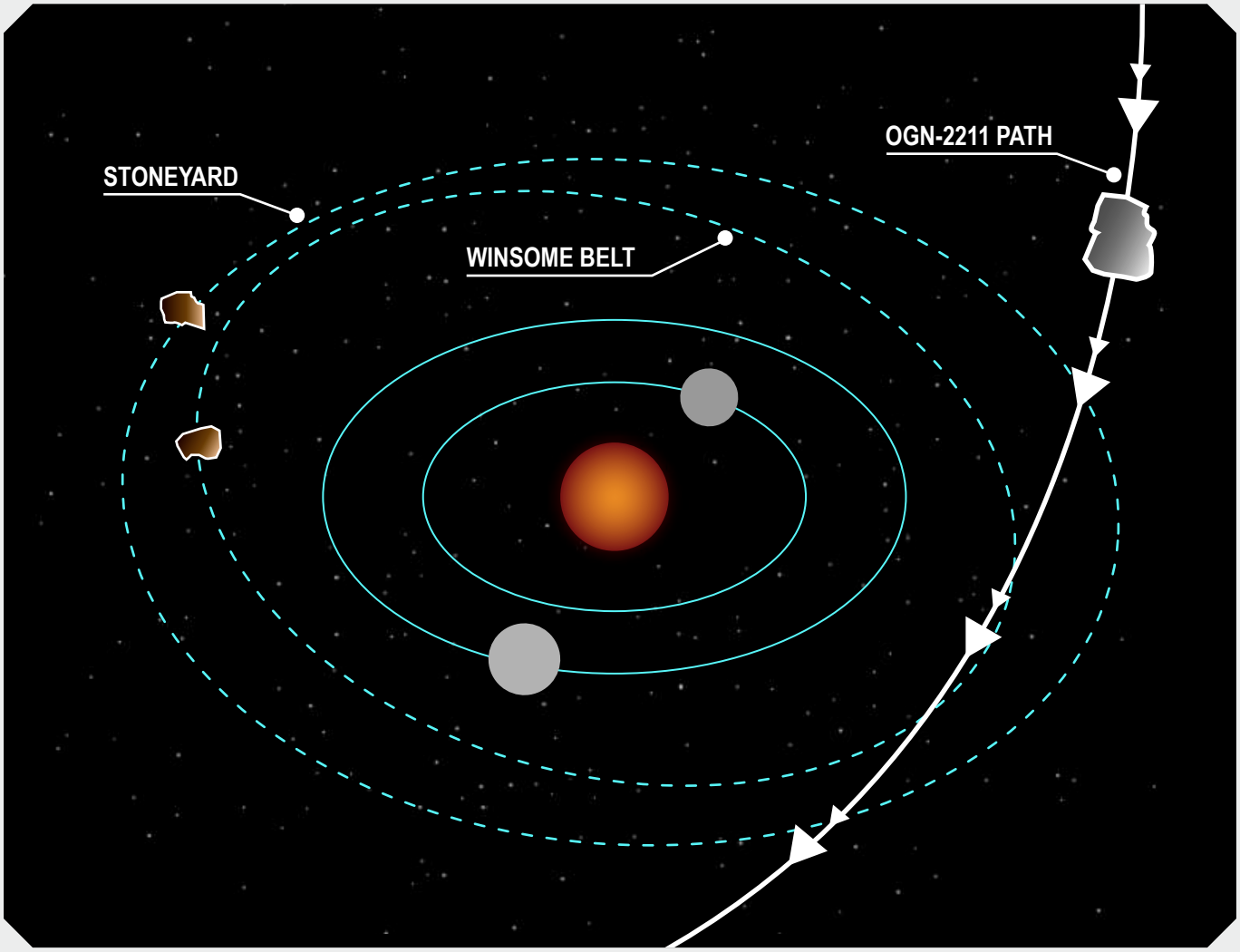
The duchess knows that Farhome's future hangs by a thread. For the system to even be considered for redesignation, everything must go right. The narrative must be overwhelmingly positive and all the right moves made. The denizens of the belt need to get along, Farhome needs to stop its precipitous decline and above all, it needs to improve its starport. It is suffering from political strife, economic depression and failing infrastructure. The duchess

knows this but worse, she knows how easy it is to knock down the deck of cards upon which Farhome's future relies. She also knows how to divide and conquer. Aursis is a ravenous consumer of other star systems, having acquired three in its home subsector and another in neighbouring Cemplas.

Object Ogn-2211 is desired by both belts. Based on survey data from the 600s, it might be a rich M-type asteroid, grade-A prospecting material. Of all the asteroids in the Farhome catalogue, Ogn-2211 has the least available information, so no one truly knows. The rock only makes one long elliptical orbit every 202 standard years, so it has been a long time since its last visit. When it last passed, in 903, Farhome was in the throes of rapid decline and its belts supported only a paltry prospecting community. For this reason, no one took much notice as the four-kilometre-wide chunk of iron-nickel went flying by. Its arrival in 1105 is heralded with a great deal more fanfare.

Belters from both belts have been designated and equipped to mine the asteroid but being limited to TL8 gear means they must wait until a relatively close flyby. Stoneyard has the first opportunity and with the technology available, its Belters will be able to mine the asteroid for approximately four days before it passes into Winsome Belt territory, affording them the same opportunity. If the prospecting reveals rich resources, Belters from one or both belts intend to lease a seeker, so they can microjump to Ogn -2211 and more fully develop it. Duchess Colyere's saboteurs intend to get there first.

Travelling in a standard seeker, the saboteurs intend to land on the asteroid, plant mining explosives on it haphazardly and detonate them, leaving behind false signs that Winsome Belt took first dibs on its minerals *while* Ogn-2211 was still in Stoneyard territory. The hope is to stir up unrest and create conflict, possibly even an inter-belt war.



If the Travellers are on the scene before the saboteurs, they have an opportunity to detect the presence of the saboteurs before they can run the false-flag operation. Starship sensors can only detect other objects with any degree of clarity when at relatively close ranges. See Sensors on page 160 of the *Traveller Core Rulebook* for Sensor Detail. However, at Very Distant range and beyond, small energy signatures can be detected, even if there is little detailed information gleaned. The Travellers may make a Difficult (10+) Electronics (sensors) check (1D x 10 minutes, INT) to scan the area where Ogn-2211 should be. Success indicates that they detect not only the planetoid but also an unidentified ship in the area, which should arouse their suspicions.

The ship's transponder is transmitting its identity, which the Travellers may intercept. If they investigate the transponder code, it clearly identifies the ship as a seeker registered on Cinch in the Winsome Belt. Further investigation shows no extended history for the ship. Its ID codes were only recently – and fictitiously – created. This supposed interloper into Stoneyard space is not a Winsome Belt ship at all but one purchased second hand in the Traa system and brought to Farhome for this operation.

The Travellers may attempt to reach the saboteurs' ship on comms but it will not answer hails. If they attempt to approach the ship, the Referee must determine how close they are to making contact. The first four orbital paths of the system are relatively compact and during the encounter, Farhome is only about 100 million kilometres from the outermost reaches of Stoneyard. At these distances, the Referee may estimate that they have between 50–75 million kilometres to cover for in-system travel purposes. By the time they arrive, the explosives will have been detonated and they will have to approach carefully. While many asteroids have a fair amount of gravel in close orbit, Ogn-2211 will have an exceptional amount because of the blast.

If the Travellers have access to improved or advanced sensors – which they do if they came in the *Velos tis Alitheia* – then they can perform a detailed survey of the asteroid from as far away as Medium range. After acquiring the sensor data, they may perform a Difficult (10+) Investigate check (1D hours, INT) to gain further information. However, if they come in close, possibly even making a spacewalk in vacc suits to have a closer look, the difficulty is reduced to Average (8+). Profession (belter) can be substituted for Investigate. Determine the Effect of the check and consult the Ogn-2211 Investigation table for the results.

Higher levels of Effect yield the data from all subsequent levels as well. Failure indicates that the Travellers can determine neither the source nor the purpose of the detonation, giving little useful information to take to the belts.

Should they want to bring evidence to the belts, the Travellers may go to Cinch (capital asteroid of Winsome Belt) or Eventide (capital of Stoneyard). The citizens of both belts have their rapt attention focused on the approach of Ogn-2211. For an offworlder, the people and culture of the two belts are virtually the same but to them, there are great differences. The 'Cinchies' have the older, more mature culture while the 'Tidies' are the more recently colonised belt with a more diverse population. The Tidies say that Winsome Belt is just about tapped out of resources, which could not be further from the truth – both belts have vast, untapped resources. The Cinchies say that the Tidies are uncivilised, uncouth and unfit to sit at their tables. In fact, the two are not very far apart in behaviour, culture or language. There is a great deal of intermixing that goes on between the two belts, with fully 20–30% of their populations switching between the belts every few years, forming friendships and familial bonds. There are immigration laws intended to prevent this from happening and space-going militias that patrol and inspect ships to ensure laws are enforced but in reality it is virtually impossible to police the belts.

Ogn-2211 Investigation

Effect	Results
0	The explosives were detonated on the surface of Ogn-2211, indicating a lack of belting skill.
1–2	The explosives used in the detonation are of a higher Tech Level than is locally available.
3–5	Bits of shrapnel, material and equipment are recovered after the detonation. Close examination shows they are not from the Farhome system.
6+	When planting the explosives, the saboteurs inadvertently left behind materiel that implicates the armed forces of Ch'naar subsector – detonators with military logos, equipment from Aursis, and so on.

Independent belt mining is a lonely business, frequently run by solitary Belters, but there are often small groups or family operations as well. Tracking down each one to make sure they originated from the proper belt would require a much greater infrastructure than is present. Most militia members are Belters themselves, who mix law-enforcement and belting activities together; while journeying to investigate a seeker that is not responding to comms calls, a militia member might stop off at an asteroid with a neutral claim to prospect it. In this environment, very little actual law enforcement occurs. An officer of the militia will almost always put prospecting before policing.

If the Travellers arrive at either Cinch or Eventide after spotting the false-flag operation on Ogn-2211, they are in possession of valuable intelligence that they might wish to share with the locals. If they provide sufficient evidence that some form of skulduggery is afoot, they might be able to broker a peace deal between the two sides and make them realise that foreign powers are working to divide them. However, if they have not acquired the intel, they find themselves in what quickly becomes a volatile environment.

After the explosives are detonated by the Shaarami operatives, there will be momentary confusion, followed by finger pointing and then recriminations from each side against the other. The Travellers may attempt to intervene, using Diplomat, Advocate, Leadership and other relevant skills, but first they must deter the two sides from committing acts against each other that they will live to regret. Both Cinch and Eventide send missile boats to Ogn-2211 to investigate what happened and determine what they should do next.

There is little the Travellers can do to prevent each side from launching a missile boat but they can get to Ogn-2211 first to investigate the scene and possibly intervene if things get hot. If they acquired any intel about the Shaarami operation, they have valuable information that can cool things off and set the stage for an eventual alliance between the two belts.

SECRET WEAPON

If the Travellers assist the Belter couple, Rawley and Brenk Teznan, described in Space Encounter on page 73, they might have a secret weapon at their disposal. Rawley was born and raised in Stoneyard and Brenk in Winsome Belt. While there are laws intended to prevent intermarriage between the citizens of each belt, their union is not unique. Intermixing is common and the belts have a lot more in common than they do differences.

The Travellers might be able to meet with the Teznans and ask them to help broker a peace deal between the two. They are a hardworking couple who have lived their entire lives in the Farhome system, living just and moral lives. The example set by the Teznans, coupled with any evidence the Travellers have found that indicates foul play on Ogn-2211, could ease the tensions between the opposing sides and pave the way for a lasting peace, and a potentially brighter future for Farhome.

Farhome's new knight has a chance to shine in this scenario. External forces are trying to make sure that the status quo is maintained, one which prevents Farhome from improving its economy, its place in interstellar society, and the health and welfare of its people. If ever there were an opportunity for a newly appointed noble to establish oneself as an important factor in the future of this star system, this is it.

FARHOME BELT MISSILE BOAT

The militias of both Winsome Belt and Stoneyard have several missile boats in their small system-defence navies. Should tensions rise, several of these small craft could end up facing off against one another, along with armed seekers, which are sometimes called upon.

Crew

Pilot, Marines x5

Hull: 32

Running Costs

MAINTENANCE COST

Cr410/month

PURCHASE COST

MCr4.92

Power Requirements

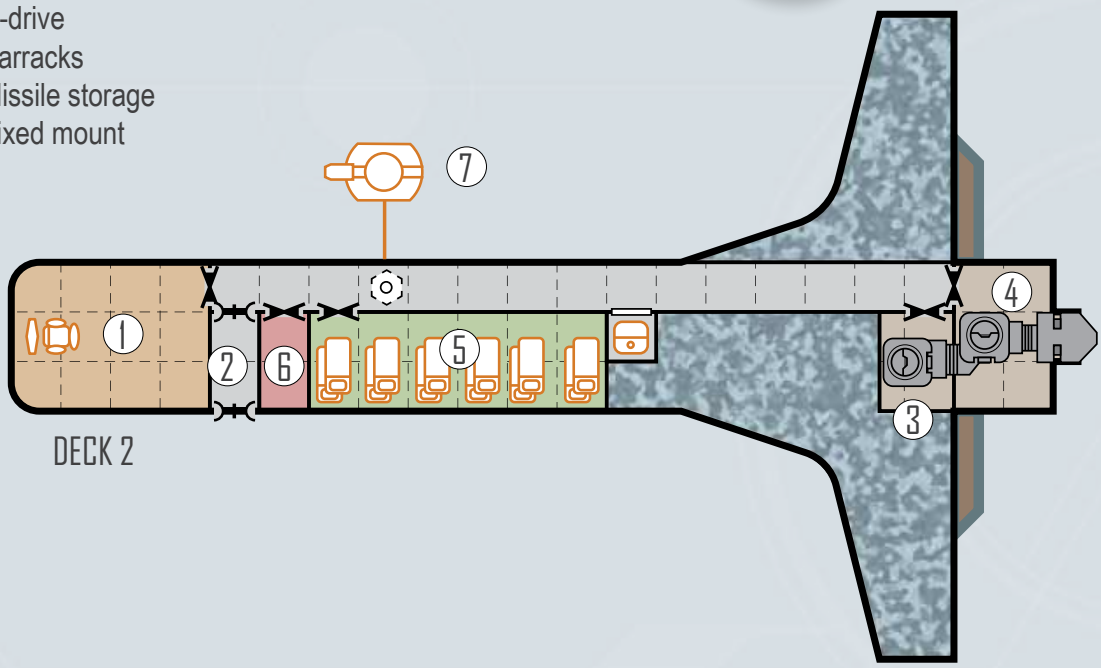
Basic Ship Systems

8

TL7		Tons	Cost (MCr)
Hull	80 tons, Close Structure, Non-Gravity	—	1.6
Armour	Titanium Steel, Armour: 2	12	0.6
R-Drive	Thrust 2	3.2	0.64
Power Plant	Chemical (TL7), Power 8	1.6	0.4
Fuel Tanks	2 days of operation, 12 hours of thrust	50	—
Bridge		6	0.5
Computer	Computer/5	—	0.03
Weapons	Fixed Mount (missile rack)	—	0.85
Ammunition	Missile Storage (12 missiles)	1	—
Staterooms	Barracks x6	6	0.3
Software	Manoeuvre	—	—

LEGEND

1. Bridge
2. Airlock
3. Power plant
4. R-drive
5. Barracks
6. Missile storage
7. Fixed mount



DECK 2

1 square = 0.5 Ton

DECK 1 FUEL ONLY

MISSIVE TO THE DUKE

The Travellers met Duke Otorre on Vvrin. After investigating the mystery of Dame Idistriy and possibly becoming embroiled in the conflict between Winsome Belt and Stoneyard, they might want to reach out to the subsector duke to report their findings. He would be interested to learn that a member of the nobility was assassinated. Such a killing is a high crime and the duke might send military assistance, possibly even a small warship, to perform a full investigation. The duke will want to see the perpetrators brought to justice.

The Travellers might be able to send a message on the next Imperial Courier Service ship (one comes to Farhome every two months or so) to the duke. The duke will be eager to help if evidence of foul play has been presented and the prospect of promoting Farhome is explained to him. The duke is neutral to the prospect of a Chanestin Cultural Zone but is enthusiastic about adding a new barony to his subsector.

KNIGHT ERRANT

One of the Travellers is the new knight of Farhome. As the new 'Lord Farhome' puts all the pieces together, they learn that the previous knight wanted to change the status of the system by redesignating its mainworld to one or both of the belts. However, the new knight *might* disagree. As they get deeper into the mystery and embroiled in the politics of the region, it becomes apparent that someone does not want to see Farhome promoted. The Travellers may have determined the origin of the saboteur if they fully investigated the false-flag operation on Ogn-2211.

As things become clearer, it will be up to the Travellers whether they want to support the cause of Dame Idistriy by advocating for a system promotion for Farhome. Alternatively, they might want to maintain the status quo or even ally themselves with the opposition. The politics of this scenario are complex and while there are reasons to be sympathetic to the cause of Farhome, the answers are not completely clear cut. The new Lord Farhome and their compatriots must ultimately decide which side they favour.

GAME CHANGER

The Moot is the primary advisory body of the Emperor, composed of all its rank nobles and drawn from all regions of the Imperium. The Emperor has absolute authority when making decisions and he may choose to ignore the advice of the Moot whenever he pleases but he does so at his own peril. The nobles of the Moot are the Emperor's voice in far-flung star systems but they also represent the citizens of the Imperium. Ignoring the will of the people, especially in matters that have broad implications, might make the Emperor unpopular, which will have a trickle-down effect that reduces his effectiveness and that of the nobility, lowers the morale of the bureaucracy and armed forces, and negatively affects his legacy.

Farhome is represented by a knight, a rank that does not carry a vote in the Moot. However, should the profile of the system be altered, and its planetoid belts be promoted to system mainworld, there is the potential that a barony would be awarded to the system. Proximity to the Chanestin worlds and shared cultural values have made the worlds of rimward Chant sympathetic to the Chanestin cause. There is every reason to think that a baron at Farhome might have the same sympathies. There are forces at work that do not want to see the Chanestin cause gain sympathy at the Moot. Recent votes have been leaning in that direction and the addition of Farhome to the caucus could finally tip the scales in favour of the Chanestin Movement.

By the time the Travellers depart Farhome to reunite with the *Ventura Fortuna*, they have had the opportunity to make things better for the locals and set up the system for potential future prosperity. Whatever the case may be, it is clear that Farhome will never be the same and the direction it takes will be greatly influenced by its new knight.

CONFLICT ON KAMODOO

After the tension, conflict and a murder mystery in the Farhome system, the Travellers might look forward to a nice visit to a pastoral port of call. If only they should be so lucky!

Kamodoo (Core 2130, B565658-B) is a pleasant and habitable world that was nudged by terraforming millennia ago into becoming the perfect site for an agricultural breadbasket for the region. It is a peaceful world, whose resident baron, Dino haut-Yelmon, lives in luxury amidst the rural farms, plantations and vineyards of the world. The profitable agribusinesses on-planet make it easy to collect taxes, from which a premium is derived for the benefit of the baron.

Visits to Kamodoo by liners give their passengers time to enjoy the wineries, fine dining and relaxed lifestyle of the locals, who speak a dialect of Galanglic that has elements of old Bengali, a lost Terran language. More adventurous passengers may elect to explore the wide-open outback of the world, roughing it in multiple climates or taking advantage of some of Kamodoo's remote resort facilities, many of which are only accessible by air/raft. There are also hunting lodges available for those who wish to take trophies from Kamodoo's complex and varied ecosystem, which has a mix of native and imported species.

Kamodoo is a favourite stop of many liner passengers for the reasons listed above but this port of call will not be quite as pleasant – at least not for the Travellers – who are confronted by agents of Count Shaaraanan, who is operating as a proxy for Duchess Colyere.

THE CRUISE CONTINUES

The Travellers reunite with the *Ventura Fontana*, either at Basilling or at Kamodoo, depending on the circumstances described in Excursion or Secret Mission on page 84. Whether their arrival at the liner is by private packet or by the *Velos tis Alitheia*, the crew and passengers of the ship are happy to see their return.

The Referee may determine what questions the passengers ask. There might even be important rumours or gossip from Basilling, which also has spies in service to the Count of Shaaram. Play the Travellers' return as a fun part of the drama. The passengers of the *Ventura Fontana* will be happy to see the crew whole again.

Rumours

1D	Rumour
1	The following day is the birthday of a passenger on board the *Ventura Fortuna*. A relative of the passenger professes to know that the Travellers were visiting another system, collecting ingredients for the birthday person's favourite meal.
2	The *Ventura Fortuna* was held up from landing its launch on Basilling. Rumour has it the recent arrival of a military shipment from Ch'naar delayed the landing by a full day.
3	A pair of close escorts, *Sword of Artemsus* and *Purveyor of Justice*, allegedly out of Shaaram, arrived two weeks ago and have remained in orbit. An investigation reveals that Shaaram does not have two such ships in its planetary navy. They must be on loan from another system.
4	There was a scuffle at Basilling Highport when an alleged member of the nobility decried the arrival of the *Ventura Fortuna* for carrying 'an insurrectionist'. She revealed that the person she was talking about was the newly knighted Traveller.
5	Duke Otorre of Vvrin came into port at Basilling aboard his yacht just as the *Ventura Fortuna* was prepared to leave. The liner jumped out of system before anyone could learn why he was there.
6	A mysterious scout ship arrived in port at Prubisk while the liner visited the port. It would have slipped beneath anyone's notice but a few of the passengers received encrypted communiques from the ship, which was on a mission for the Imperial Courier Service.

RUMOURS

Reuniting with the passengers creates a flood of information from their travels to Prubisk, Basilling and recent arrival at Kamodoo. For each Traveller who makes a successful Average (8+) Carouse or Streetwise check, roll 1D on the Rumours table to learn a rumour.

In addition to the listed rumours, Baron haut-Yelmon is withholding information that could be vital to the Travellers. He has learned that the Count of Shaaram has deployed a team of mercenaries – a commando/intelligence ops unit called XY-51 that intends to detain the *Ventura Fortuna* on false grounds of attempting to disturb the flow of free trade between the Chant and Dunea subsectors. The accusation is clearly spurious but that may not prevent the mercenaries from performing their assigned ticket.

The baron has been told to keep his mouth shut about the operation but if the Travellers make contact with him and establish a good relationship, possibly ensuring that their passengers enjoy some tourism and behave themselves while planetside, he will call one or more of them aside – possibly the knight, a high-ranking officer, or even Captain Eilerfaust – to inform them of the date that a 'detainment' is intended to take place. Otherwise, a squad-sized unit from XY-51 carries out the operation on the fifth day of the Travellers' time on Kamodoo.

XY-51 will arrive at the *Ventura Fortuna*, demand entrance to the ship on grounds that they have been deputised to enforce Imperial law and then make vague declarations about the nature of the detainment. If the Travellers let them aboard, they will attempt to take the ship by force and will not relinquish control until two Shaarami *Gazelle*-class close escorts (the *Sword of Artemsus* and *Purveyor of Justice*, described on the Rumours table) arrive to seize the ship on the authority of the Count of Shaaram.

XY-51 Mercenaries
STR 9 DEX 9 END 8
AOC (soldier) 2

Advanced Combat Rifle (3D, Auto 3, Scope), Combat Environment Suit (+8)

There are two ways to get out of this crisis. The first is by legal means. The Travellers can expose the inspection and impound of their ship for the sham that it is by making an Average (8+) Advocate or Admin check (1D x 10 minutes, EDU). If they successfully do this before allowing the mercenaries to enter their ship, the inspection never has to happen. The mercenaries will be served a notice by the local police force that their actions are unlawful and would they please cease and desist. Effect 6+ gets the mercenaries' contract revoked by the local authority

and triggers their repatriation bond. Taking the legal route *after* letting the mercenaries come aboard makes things more complicated.

The mercenary commander will try to prevent the crew from accessing the ship's computer. However, any portable computer devices may still be used. In addition, the *Ventura Fortuna* is not just any old ship. Unbeknownst to anyone (with the possible exception of the Travellers), it is guided by a powerful TL16 conscious intelligence for whom it is child's play to circumvent lesser security configurations. Even if the Travellers have erroneously succumbed to the authority of the mercenaries, their ship's übercomputer could be a valuable tool for getting them out of trouble.

If the Travellers bumble through this encounter and manage to get themselves interned, first by the mercenaries and later by the pair of close escorts, then they effectively remove themselves from the final chapter of this adventure. It could be a tricky and complex situation. They may have passengers to recall from the surface of Kamodoo and the authority of both the mercenaries and the deployed Gazelles could be confusing. They will have to navigate the situation carefully.

The consequences of detaining a ship on dubious grounds are irrelevant to the mercenaries' patron, Count Olecraz Shaaraanan of Shaaram. Any legal entanglements he gets himself into will be tied up in the courts for an extensive period of time and by then *his* patron, the Duchess Colyere, will have found a way to extract him from the legal mire in which he has become embroiled. The takeaway from this scenario is the desperation of the Count and Duchess, who will seemingly stop at nothing to prevent the Travellers and their knight from completing their voyage.

A KNIGHT'S METTLE

The Chanestin Kingdom once ruled 25 worlds, all of which were within five parsecs of Keshi (Core 1938, B566AD8-9), its capital. Just outside that sphere is Dindakhara (Core 2034, B424579-D), a fairly insignificant world known more for its odd collection of bickering states and surprisingly high-quality highport than any strategic value. However, when the Travellers arrive aboard their luxury liner, they find that it has become central in the plans of Duchess Colyere.

Astrographically, it is as good a place as any to stage a firewall against the 'threat' of Chanestin rebellion. It is one parsec outside the borders of the kingdom, and neighbouring Diliig is a Chanestin outpost. By the time the Travellers have begun to come in for refuelling from jump point, they can collect news from the system. Normally local news would have been disparate accounts (Dindakhara is balkanised and each of the local territories tends to tell the story a bit differently than the others) of visiting ships, the latest mineral and gas yields from the outer system planets, and gossip, but there is something big going on that is dominating the scene.

Duchess Colyere is present with a squadron of her planetary navy and she is accompanied by a large cadre of journalists from Aursis, Uundizi, Shaaram and Zishma Kha, all of whom are sympathetic to her cause. The journalists are present to witness the Duchess' declaration of the 'Bulwark', a movement to prevent the influx of high-tech weapons and equipment being used to supply the 'Sons of the Red Dawn', a minor Chanestin resistance organisation better known for violent rhetoric than anything it has accomplished. There *are* more violent and revolutionary Chanestin groups but they keep a low profile. The Duchess' propaganda machine has focused their efforts on amplifying the rhetoric of the loudest group of dissidents, not the most effective.

The Sons are being touted as a major threat to stir up sympathy for Aursis' cause, which as they describe it is to 'defend the sanctity and security of our great Imperium'. When the Travellers arrive, presumably with their newly ennobled cohort, the Duchess points the spotlight at the *Ventura Fortuna*, declaring that it has none other than the most important knight in the realm aboard.

The Aursisian Squadron includes:

- The two Gazelle-class close escorts (the *Sword of Artemsus* and *Purveyor of Justice*) last seen on Kamodoo
- One light reconnaissance ship, the *Voyeur* (see page 100 of *Adventure Class Ships*)
- One Valour-class missile corvette, the *By Fiat* (see page 106 of *Adventure Class Ships*)
- One Missionary-class personnel transport, the *Price of Fealty*, equipped with a 60-ton barracks module in its modular space
- The flagship of the group, a Chrysanthemum-class destroyer escort, the *Visitor* (see page 207 of *High Guard*)

PERSONNEL TRANSPORT

CLASS: Missionary

The Missionary is designed to carry a standard complement of 60 personnel in cost-effective fashion. Four modular cutters are provided to transport personnel and equipment to a planetary surface. The ship includes a 60-ton modular hull, in which a variety of customised modules may be inserted. Popular modules include a barracks for 60 additional personnel, doubling its capacity, and two-module storage, for mission versatility. Cutter modules are described on page 145–147 of *High Guard*.

TL12		Tons	Cost (MCr)
Hull	800 tons, Streamlined	—	48
	Modular Hull (60 tons)	60	3.6
Armour	Crystaliron, Armour: 4	48	9.6
M-Drive	Thrust 3	24	48
J-Drive	Jump 2	45	67.5
Power Plant	Fusion (TL12), Power 480	32	32
Fuel Tanks	J-2, 4 weeks of operation	164	—
Bridge		20	4
Computer	Computer/20	—	5
Sensors	Military Grade	2	4.1
Weapons	Double Turrets (pulse lasers) x6	6	15
	Double Turrets (sandcasters) x2	2	2
Subcraft	Docking Spaces (50 tons) x4	220	55
	Modular Cutters x4	—	47.72
Systems	Fuel Processor (40 tons/day)	2	0.1
	Fuel Scoops	—	—
	Armouries x5	5	1.25
	Medical Bays x2	8	4
Staterooms	Standard x14	56	7
	Barracks x60	60	3
Software	Manoeuvre	—	—
	Jump Control/2	—	0.2
	Intellect	—	—
	Library	—	—
	Evade/1	—	1
	Fire Control/2	—	4
Common Areas		14	1.4
Cargo		32	—

Crew

Pilot, Astrogator, Engineers x3, Gunners x8, Modular Cutter Pilots x4, Medics x2, Marines x60

Hull: 320

Running Costs

MAINTENANCE COST

Cr30289/month

PURCHASE COST

MCr363.47

Power Requirements

Basic Ship Systems
160

Manoeuvre Drive
240

Jump Drive
160

Sensors
2

Weapons
56

Fuel Processor
2

Medical Bay
2

MISSIONARY-CLASS PERSONNEL TRANSPORT

MODULES

Both modules have a Power requirement of 12, for which the power plant of the Missionary has capacity.

BARRACKS MODULE

TL8		Tons	Cost (MCr)
Hull	60 tons, Standard	—	3
Staterooms	Barracks x60	60	3

Running Costs

MAINTENANCE COST

Cr500/month

PURCHASE COST

MCr6

Power Requirements

Basic Ship Systems

12

STORAGE MODULE

TL8		Tons	Cost (MCr)
Hull	60 tons, Standard	—	3
Cargo		60	—

Running Costs

MAINTENANCE COST

Cr500/month

PURCHASE COST

MCr6

Power Requirements

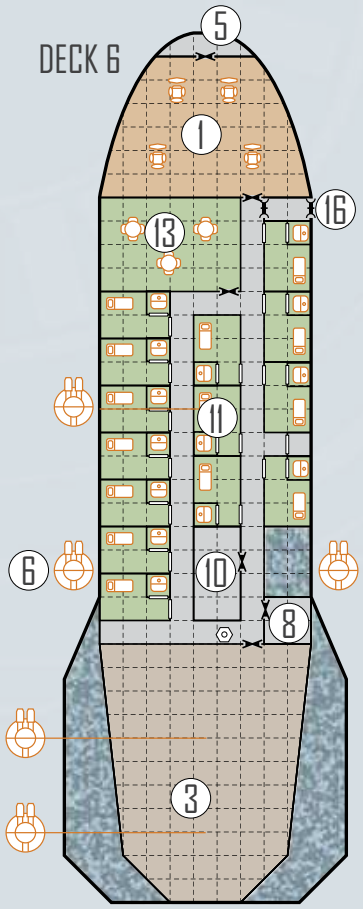
Basic Ship Systems

12

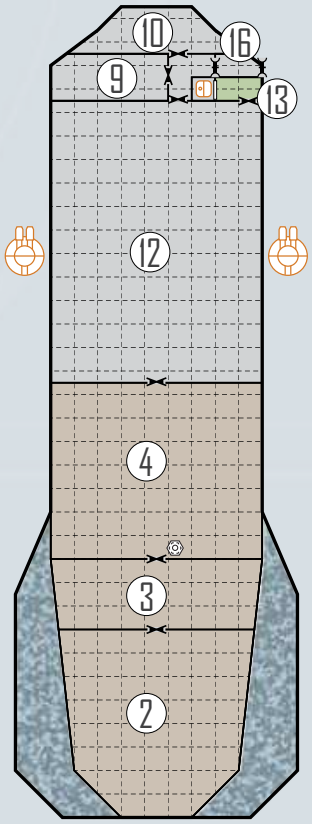
MISSIONARY-CLASS PERSONNEL TRANSPORT

1 square = 0.5 Ton

DECK 6



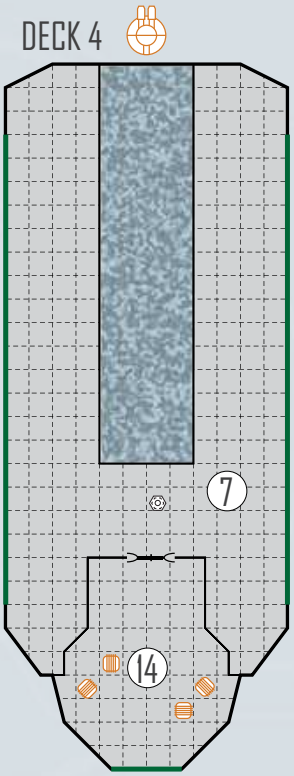
DECK 5



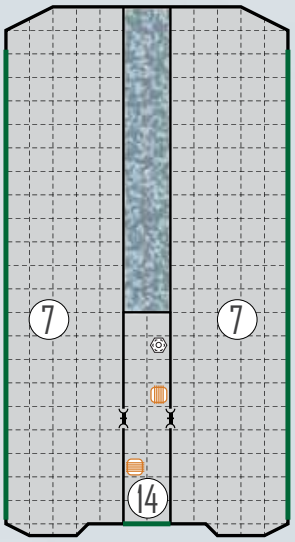
LEGEND

1. Bridge
2. M-drive
3. J-drive
4. Power plant
5. Sensors
6. Double turrets
7. Docking spaces
8. Fuel processor
9. Armouries
10. Medical bays
11. Staterooms
12. Barracks
13. Common areas
14. Cargo
15. Module space
16. Airlock

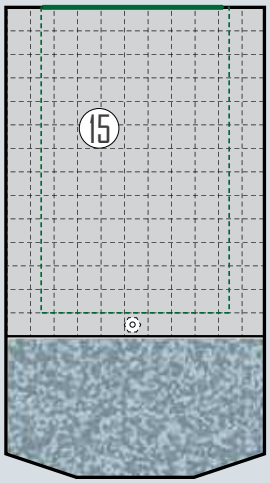
DECK 4



DECK 3



DECK 2



DECK 1 FUEL ONLY

Colyere makes her move, bringing a company of Aursisia Exèrciti (described in *The Third Imperium* and *Journal of the Travellers' Aid Society Volume 10*). The Exèrciti are her 'house troops' or 'Huscarles' as they are known. Most Huscarle units are comparable with regular army units but the Exèrciti lack the discipline of the Imperial military. Many have been selected for their loyalty to the Duchess and willingness to commit war crimes.

THE DUCHESS' PLAN

Whether or not the Travellers are waylaid at Kamodoo, the Duchess refuses to leave things to chance. She intends to make the case – for all to see – that the Chanestin Movement is a threat to the Imperium.

She has come to Dindakhara to defend the empire and to make a statement. She has created a narrative that the world is under siege and cites dubious historical events to make the story more relatable.

First, the threat. The Sons of the Red Dawn – a known Chanestin terrorist organisation – have infiltrated the highport. They have hacked its systems using stolen technology from Imperial-sympathetic Uundizi; made it impossible for visiting ships to dock, refuel or conduct commerce; planted surveillance devices throughout the facility; and possibly boobytrapped them with explosives. All of this is fabricated. The Sons have never proven to be viable contenders on the resistance front but they do get sympathy from various quarters of the Chanestin population. Their proposals to conduct violence against Imperial invaders might be pleasing to the ear of aggrieved Chanestin people but the group's ability to deliver on their threats against Imperial assets has always been questionable.

Second is the rescue. Bringing a squadron of ships from the Aursis Planetary Navy, Duchess Colyere leads her troops into battle to liberate the starport, right wrongs and set things back to the way they were. Aursis' impressive TL14 technology is used to secure Dindakhara's data systems, ferret out the surveillance devices, locate the explosives and finally... to identify the culprits, four of whom they conveniently catch in the act of planting a small nuclear weapon on the hull of the highport.

In the concluding act of the Duchess' drama, she declares the Bulwark; a movement to prevent the Chanestin from performing terrorist acts, spreading rhetoric beyond Dunea subsector and clearly preventing them from having their Cultural Zone. She intends to declare martial law, asserting that Dindakhara failed to properly defend its Imperial assets (namely the highport). Furthermore, she intends to assert Aursisian authority over the planet, making it the fifth in Aursis' collection of occupied worlds. Dindakhara's knight will be deposed, possibly forced back into the ranks of 'honour nobles', opening the way for the Duchess to influence the appointment of a new knight, one sympathetic to her cause.

THE DOUR KNIGHT OF DINDAKHARA

Yolanda Thirriaminim has held the role of Dame Dindakhara for decades. She was once a woman of great ambition but after several bureaucratic and legislative failures, and her reputation in tatters, she has resigned herself to serving out her life as a 'lowly' knight on an inconsequential world. She is, in some ways, the opposite of our knighted Traveller.

Our knight inherited a world of little consequence, only to see its value grow exponentially. Conversely, Dindakhara's fortunes were at their apotheosis when the world was first put under the tutelage of Dame Yoli. It was expected that its position on the Chanestin Main would make it a trade nexus but ultimately it was Zishma Kha that took the vast bulk of trade traffic. While Dindakhara's technology is nothing to spit at, nearby Kiir – fed by Uundizian innovation – surpasses its Tech Level and deprives it of yet another potential claim to fame.

Dindakhara had the potential to shine among the systems in the region, foisting its noble upon a dais of recognition and promotion, but none of this came to pass. Many nobles are content with their station no matter what it is. Each fief has its unique challenges and just keeping up with the needs of an entire world is enough for most members of the nobility but not for Dame Yoli. She had hoped for so much more.

MAKING A STAND

By now, the Travellers should have a sense of the complex politics of the region and may decide which side they want to align with. They may stand with the Chanestin people and their sympathisers who hope to endow them with a degree of liberty and self-determination, or they may align with the Aursisian Duchess, who asserts that Cultural Zones granted to 'terrorists and insurrectionists' only serve to denigrate the integrity of the Imperium.

If the Travellers want to support the Duchess' Bulwark movement, all they have to do is ask. They will primarily be occupied managing the inefficiencies of the Aursisia Exèrciti, who are better at intimidating weak worlds and running veritable protection rackets than they are at running an effective counterinsurgency operation. The adventure becomes a trial for the Travellers as they have to get things back on track for each phase of the Duchess' operation.

If the Travellers ally themselves with the Duchess, they have the opportunity to meet her and hear her stance. Colyere argues that her underhanded tactics are merely to defend the Imperium. The end justifies the means. Says the Duchess:

The Chanestin claim to sovereignty is weak by the standards of Imperial history. Let's not forget that they lost to the fledgling Imperium after fighting a dirty war in which they committed numerous atrocities, including the bombardment of civilians on Shudushaam. Don't shed any tears for these people. They're no heroes.

Alternatively, if the Travellers seek to oppose the Bulwark movement, they must attempt to thwart each step of the Duchess' plan. First, they must expose the Sons of the Red Dawn ruse for the sham that it is. This can be done by interrogating members of the Aursisia Exèrciti or intercepting their communications. If done well enough, that might stop the Bulwark operation in its tracks. In the second phase of the operation, they can interfere with the Aursisia Exèrciti's troop movements and prove that the captured 'Sons of the Red Dawn' are nothing of the kind. They are foreign operatives, put in place to serve as fall guys. For added intrigue, it may be revealed that they are former members of the XY-51 mercenary company, last seen on Kamodoo. After being tried in Aursisian-created kangaroo courts, the operatives will eventually be set free and paid for their efforts. If the Duchess is successful enough to

THE ORDER OF CHANESTIN

Should the Travellers fall in with the Chanestin Movement, striving to continue the work of the deceased Dame Idistriy, they are recognised by a delegation from Kesha, the ostensible capital of the desired Cultural Zone. This honour is granted to both the knighted Traveller and Dame Yoli. It might even give her the chance to achieve some of the fame and notoriety that she sought earlier in her noble career.

Membership in the order is granted at Keshi, the terminus of the Chanestin Route. The pomp and circumstance will be greatly enjoyed by the passengers of the *Ventura Fortuna*.

THE ORDER OF THE BULWARK

If the Travellers work with the Duchess Colyere, their knight is bestowed the honour of membership in the Order of the Bulwark, granted to those knights who stand in opposition to the Chanestin Movement. The award is granted at Dindakhara when Duchess Colyere's ruse has played out successfully.

reach the final act of her operation – declaring the Bulwark and annexing Dindakhara – the Travellers must find a way to prevent public opinion or the burden of proof from falling in her favour.

The key to the Duchess' defeat might be none other than lowly Dame Yoli, the local Imperial knight. Yoli has the local connections to oppose the Duchess every step of the way, with access to personnel who can prove the hack job is a fake, to rousing her security forces to opposing the Aursisia Exèrciti's attempts to seize property. She will also have the resources to prove that the stand-ins for Red Dawn are not who they claim to be.

Dame Yoli is neutral to the Chanestin cause initially but can inadvertently become its staunch ally by preventing the intrusive Duchess from asserting her will in Dunea subsector.

EPILOGUE

Cultural Zones serve several important purposes in the Imperium. First and foremost, they allow unique subcultures to maintain their distinct identities while still owing allegiance to the Imperium. Ancillary benefits include keeping the peace with regions of interstellar space that might otherwise become unstable.

This is a big departure from Imperial policy a millennium ago, during the age of consolidation. In the formative years of the Imperium, during the Pacification Campaigns, Emperor Artemsus used several methods to coerce worlds into the Imperial sphere, including diplomacy, economic pressure and, if necessary, military force. Invasion and orbital bombardment were used when all else failed, hailing back to the era of the Ziru Sirka when such techniques were deemed effective. The Julian War and rise of neighbouring alien polities were a wake-up call to the Imperium, whose leaders decided that they should not be bombing their worlds into submission. The advent of Cultural Zones to placate portions of the population were deemed a suitable alternative.

Each of the existing Cultural Zones was granted for unique reasons. Some regions had been rebellious for years and the Imperium had to make a decision whether to forcibly subdue them, as they had during the Ilelish Revolt, or to find more peaceable means. The Lancian Cultural Region could have been brought to heel in the same way but the sheer size of the affected region would have made it a bitter pill to swallow. The Amec Protectorate was awarded for similar reasons. The Vegan Autonomous District was granted to acknowledge the loyalty of the Vegan species and to serve as a bulwark against Solomani Aggression. The League of Antares is a tacit acknowledgement that the Imperium actually lost its war in the region and that some degree of autonomy might assuage any desire for complete independence.

Granting the Chanestin people their own Cultural Zone is a tricky proposition. The region has long languished economically and therefore does not have extensive wealth to draw upon. While there are dissidents and insurgents, they have not risen much above a minor nuisance to the Imperium. The fact that the region is close to Capital is a concern. While the former worlds of the Interstellar Confederacy have not shown much of a rebellious streak, some in the Moot worry that granting a Cultural Zone to the Chanestin worlds will stir up similar ideas in the Cemplas and Bunkeria subsectors, where the former Confederate worlds are. On the other hand, political scientists and economists have theorised that granting the Chanestin worlds a degree of independence might stir cultural pride and spark an economic boom in the region, which might also have a positive effect on the economically depressed worlds of the Chant subsector. It is a complex issue, one that keeps Emperor Strephon and the Moot Chancellor up late at night. There is no easy answer. The Emperor fears that with each Cultural Zone grant, more regions will be emboldened to request the same arrangement. Should too many be granted, the Imperium becomes less of a distinct entity and more of a diffuse one, which might embolden its enemies who could exploit the inherent divisions.

Naalir believes that identity is an important part of the make-up of sophonts and that granting symbolic divisions and borders does not necessarily affect the whole of the Imperium from also having a distinct purpose; however, were the practice more widespread, it would be far different than it is today.

What really matters is what the knighted Traveller thinks, especially if their fief has been – or may soon be – converted into a barony, at which point they would ascend into the peerage, those members of the nobility who have a vote at the Moot. Duchess Colyere and like-minded nobles who want to block the Chanestin Cultural Zone, will continue trying to obtain the Farhome proxy but ultimately it will be the Traveller's decision whether they sell their proxy to a likeminded noble or travel to Capital to vote when the time comes to determine the destiny of the Chanestin worlds.

DUKE MAGLATO OTORRE

SPECIES	GENDER	AGE
Human	Male	61

TRAITS			—	SKILLS
STR	6	INT	9	Admin 0, Advocate 0, Art (performance) 2, Carouse 2, Diplomat 3, Electronics 0, Flyer (grav) 2, Gambler 2, Investigate 0, Language (Vilani) 3, Leadership 2, Persuade 0
DEX	9	EDU	11	
END	5	SOC	15	

Duke Otorre is a dilettante, a man of society. Although he comes from wealth, he has always been a devout champion of Chant, working to enhance the economically depressed subsector's opportunities and attempting to raise its standing in the Core.

LEVI SHAARAANAN

SPECIES	GENDER	AGE
Human	Male	56

TRAITS			—	SKILLS
STR	9	INT	6	Admin 0, Advocate 0, Deception 1, Diplomat 0, Electronics 1 (remote ops), Flyer (grav) 1, Gambler 2, Investigate 0, Persuade 1
DEX	8	EDU	8	
END	9	SOC	10	

Levi is an inveterate layabout who has never lifted a finger to do anything useful but worse, he is certain that he deserves to have the wealth and opulence that is his due thanks to circumstances of being born to a duke. Levi is 56 years old but does not look a day over 30 thanks to his Lentuli blood.

LAZA HOLBORN

SPECIES	GENDER	AGE
Human	Female	32

TRAITS			—	SKILLS
STR	10	INT	9	Admin 0, Advocate 0, Art (visual media) 1, Athletics (dexterity) 3, Carouse 0, Flyer 0, Language (Old Sylean) 1, Melee (blade) 4
DEX	12	EDU	9	
END	9	SOC	10	

WEAPONS	Lanthanum-laced rapier (2D)
ARMOUR	Cloth (+5)

DUCHESS COLYERE HAJESTA DAMAE

SPECIES	GENDER	AGE
Human	Female	68

TRAITS			—	SKILLS
STR	8 (9)	INT	13	Admin 2, Athletics (strength) 1, Flyer (grav) 1, Diplomat 1, Electronics (comms) 1, Gun Combat (energy) 2, Heavy Weapons (portable) 1, Leadership 4, Melee (blade) 2, Melee (unarmed) 1, Persuade 4, Recon 2, Tactics (military) 3, Vacc Suit 2
DEX	8 (9)	EDU	12	
END	9	SOC	15	

WEAPONS	Marine Static Cutlass (3D+2, AP6) when in dress uniform, laser pistol (4D, AP2, high yield) when a sidearm is allowed
ARMOUR	Personal Energy Shield (+12) or TL15 Battle Dress (+25), depending on the situation
EQUIPMENT	Neural Comm, Neural Jack, Wafer Jack, Muscular Bridging

DAME YOLANDA THIRRIAMINIM OF DINDAKHARA

SPECIES	GENDER	AGE
Human	Female	42

TRAITS				SKILLS
STR	5	INT	10	Admin 2, Advocate 1, Diplomat 1, Electronics (computers) 2, Gun Combat (energy) 1, Investigate 1, Streetwise 1
DEX	6	EDU	8	
END	7	SOC	11	

FAVOUR

Favour in this adventure will be awarded from one or two of three factions:

- The noble peerage of Chant Subsector
- The Duchess Damae and her Aursisia Exèrciti
- The Chanestin Worlds

Outcomes

Outcome	Award
The Travellers support the cause of the departed Dame Idistriy and try to get Farhome redesignated. In addition, if the world is promoted, the knighted Traveller is promoted to Baron, increasing SOC from 11 to 12.	2 Political 1 Influencer 1 Wealth
The Travellers ally themselves with Duchess Damae and the Aursisia Exèrciti, successfully preventing Farhome from achieving redesignation.	2 Underworld 1 Political
They defeat the Aursisia Exèrciti at Kamodoo. Favour awarded from Chanestin worlds but Duchess Colyere becomes an Enemy.	1 Political

THE OFFER

Organised crime thrives in the Third Imperium. It prospers in the cracks and crevices of interstellar society, in overpopulated urban dystopias and in the prodigious legal and governmental gaps between star systems. The worlds of the Imperium are very different from one world to the next. One might be an egalitarian free-for-all, but one parsec away an authoritarian regime runs the show. The next world after that might be controlled by a religious dictator or a totalitarian oligarchy. Another might have multiple governments, a collection of bickering nations. The differences between these worlds provides a medium in which crime flourishes. What is legal in one system might be illegal in the next. Smuggling goods between worlds with disparate Law Levels, trafficking sophonts, selling illegal drugs and technology, and fencing stolen goods are the lifeblood of criminal enterprises. The greater the legal and governmental 'topography' between systems, the more opportunities there are for mischief.

While criminal organisations may be found in many regions of the Imperium, the Shinkan subsector in the Core is notorious for being almost entirely controlled by gangsters. In this Departure, the Travellers find themselves drawn into an interstellar gang war, a conflict between powerful interstellar mobs and corrupt Imperial agencies. As it turns out, the *Ventura Fortuna* contains something extremely valuable, something that one of the mob lords would do just about anything to obtain. If the Travellers play their cards right, they might be able to use this asset to influence the outcome of events in Shinkan for good or ill. Of the various gangs and agencies involved, the Travellers must choose who they want to cooperate with but as they shall see, it is not easy to pick worthy allies.

The Offer is the story of competing crime syndicates engaged in a battle of domination, with the Travellers caught in the middle. In the midst of this gang war, there are two tragic romances being played out, both of which would make for a fine opera in the theatres of Capital. One features a lost soul whose dying wish is to protect his family and change things for his people. The other is the tale of a seemingly incorrigible blackheart and the one person who can change her. These two stories are the lynchpins of the adventure and the Travellers become embroiled in their dramas.

REQUIREMENTS AND PRELIMINARIES

To conduct this adventure, the Travellers must be operating the *Ventura Fortuna* along the Imperial Route (see Liner Routes on page 21). As they arrive at Kamsii, the terminus of the route, they receive a request from one of the passengers to extend their voyage into the Antarean Spur, which leads them into Shinkan. Per cruise rules, the extension must be agreed upon unanimously by all the passengers. Some negotiation between the passengers might be required but more often than not, the cruise is extended. It is, after all, a pleasure cruise and an opportunity for adventure piques the interest of the rich clientele of a luxury liner.

The requesting party is Mari Ygbo, a representative of the Ishnuunar (Core 2904, D572944-7) Mercantile Guild. She is an attorney and skilled negotiator who represents guild interests outside of Shinkan. Ygbo has secret motives. There is something aboard the ship that she wants and it can only be obtained if the ship is detained at Minos.

As a passenger of the liner, Ygbo is entitled to a private cargo lot. Unbeknownst to the Travellers, she uses her lot to plant contraband on their ship. Refer to Luxury Passage in the *Singularity Sourcebook* for more information on cargo lots. If the Travellers do not discover its presence, the contraband will be used to manipulate them as the adventure proceeds.

INTRODUCTION

The structure of The Offer is different than other adventures. It is a sandbox but not the type in which the Travellers wander an interstellar region looking for clues or trying to resolve plot threads. In this adventure, there are numerous factions, each of whom seeks a different outcome. Some want things to remain the same in Shinkan, leaving the current criminal hierarchy in place. Others want to shake things up, turn the subsector upside down and change the landscape completely. No one group is necessarily 'in the right' in this scenario. Each are flawed criminal enterprises, including one supported by the Imperium. The Travellers may ally themselves with the person or group that best aligns with their goals. Each path will have a different result, one that will dictate the direction Shinkan takes for years to come.

The centrepiece of the adventure is the *Ventura Fortuna* itself. As described in the introduction to this act of the campaign, the antiquated liner contains millions of Credits worth of art. The ship is essentially a spaceborne museum whose collection is renowned throughout the Core, one of the many reasons wealthy and famous passengers choose to travel on it. Among these is a mural titled *The Bargain*, a piece greatly desired by one of the key criminal figures of Shinkan. It is an abstract piece that depicts events that led up to the Imperial Civil War. The terracotta wall upon which the piece was painted was extracted from its original location long ago, a government building on Ances (Core 1812, B583757-B), and somehow found its way into the possession of a previous owner of the *Ventura Fortuna* – and within the ship it remains. At the time of its acquisition, there was a dispute about which of the period's famous muralists produced the piece but scholars from multiple reputable universities have solved the mystery.

The Bargain was painted decades earlier by Izririili Odituili, an Aezorgh from Strashna in Lishun sector. Odituili's most distinguished descendant is Midipudi 'Victrix' Audua Odituili, an Aezorgh 'businessperson' from Ishnuunar who is known to have been a close associate with the Ishnuunar Syndicate's boss, a Threep named Andalario Vistume Enoula. Although they are of two different species, they were romantically involved. Allegedly, the relationship was broken off by Victrix, who grew tired of the brutal tactics used by her gangster paramour.

Victrix recently became aware that *The Bargain* was the work of her ancestor and she has wanted to acquire it ever since. Obtaining the mural has become her obsession, a fact that has not escaped the notice of enemy spies, nor her jilted ex-lover, Enoula. Victrix alone does not have the funds to purchase such an expensive piece but Enoula does. Enoula desperately wants to regain Victrix's favour and obtaining an art piece from her most famous ancestor would be an exceptional way to do it.

Rumour got out that there was a market for a mysterious art piece and the crafty intelligence network of the Ekilati Onati – a Vargr crime organisation based on Aarza Kand – sent operatives to learn more about it. One of these operatives was Angngo Unge, who had been sent with two cohorts to Ishnuunar to collect intel on the syndicate. Her associates had their covers blown and they were killed in a subsequent gunfight but Angngo survived and was captured by the Ninua Provisional Interstellar Police Department (NPIPD), who took her into custody. She has not been seen since. For more about Angngo, see The Suspect on page 110.

Enoula has her sights set on *The Bargain* and will stop at nothing to obtain it. She intends to give it as a gift to her ex, hoping to win her back. Rumour has it that should Victrix accept the gift, Enoula might be willing to give up her criminal empire to regain her lost lover's favour. The only way to fully regain Victrix's good graces would be to fully extricate herself from the daily operation of the gang. However, showing weakness in the realm of Shinkan's gangs can be dangerous. If the other gangs get wind that Enoula is distracted and considering an exit, they might make a move to usurp her operation before she can prepare for a more organised departure. In competitive Shinkan, a moment of weakness can be the death knell for a gang and its leader.

Initially only Enoula knows that *The Bargain* was on the *Ventura Fortuna*; however, due to the difficulties of tracing interstellar travel, no one initially knows where the ship is. In addition, there are rumours that the piece may have already been sold to a private party, traded to another ship, or donated to a museum on one of its routes. Enoula wants to confirm the location of the piece before making her move.

SYNDICATE SPACE

The moment the *Ventura Fortuna* crosses the border from Kaskii into Shinkan, things noticeably change. Superficially, things are not much different. It is still the Imperium after all. Shinkan's worlds vary in governance and culture much like anywhere else. The Imperial Navy is present, as is the nobility but neither seems to be much involved in local affairs. Nobles play a less active role in the management of Shinkan; most of their responsibilities have been assumed by the criminal enterprises that dominate the subsector. The nobles themselves are merely the mouthpieces of the criminals who actually administer their worlds. The navy seems more concerned with running drills on the outskirts of the subsector than actively patrolling or making their presence felt throughout. While the navy has a ubiquitous presence in most of the Imperium, in Shinkan it is more as if they *surround* the subsector rather than *permeate* it.

Planetary navies hold significantly more sway in Shinkan. They are far more corruptible and manageable than the Imperial Navy and therefore are of greater use to the powers who actually control the subsector.

The Travellers can trade, visit, tour, explore and become involved in adventures in Shinkan just like anywhere else but underneath the surface, this subsector is unlike others. The standard rules do not apply here. Some might wonder why this is tolerated, especially so close to Capital. The syndicates of Shinkan run the subsector like an interstellar protection racket. Pay your dues and you will not have a problem. Shirk on your debts and pay the consequences. All of this is allowed because the syndicates squeeze more from the populace than the nobility can. Simply put, Shinkan is a profitable venture for the Imperium in spite of its corruption.

THE GANGS

Following are the forces that control Shinkan at the moment, along with their current status and a description of their machinations.

Gang	Status	Description
Ishnuunar Mercantile Guilds	In power	Despite its humble Tech Level, Ishnuunar is the de facto capital of Shinkan. Its leader, Andalario Vistume Enoula, has built a seemingly indestructible criminal empire with a combination of cunning, political savvy and sound business practices, enhanced of course with a healthy dose of intimidation, blackmail, bribery and assassination.
The Derku and Gekhuu Syndicates	Pretenders to the throne	Led by Nizarrith 'Niz' Kalkouta and Namalesa 'Nam' Aam, respectively, the syndicates are somewhat sloppily run criminal enterprises, leagues apart from the vastly superior Ishnuunar Mercantile Guilds. They are typical organised crime operations, with protection rackets, sophont trafficking, illegal substances and technology smuggling, but they do so at the mercy of Ishnuunar, whose more sophisticated operation dwarfs their efforts. Ishnuunar sees them as 'useful idiots'.
Ekilati Onati	The upstarts	The Irilotok Vargr crime organisation is small in comparison with the Ishnuunar, Derku and Gekhuu operations, but what they lack in size and numbers, they make up for with motivation and innovation. Their leader, Vaerzza 'Ghorrd' Ghorrdzaerskourz, is a wily and elusive individual who seems to be playing 3D chess while all the others are playing checkers. Ghorrd has a plan and the intel to make has plan work but he does have weaknesses.
NPIPD	Keepers of the status quo	The Ninua-based law enforcement agency just wants to keep the Credits flowing to Capital. Lieutenant Szaken has been dispatched to Minos to gather intelligence, thwart the upstart Ekilati Onati and to make sure that the Ishnuunari mob stays in power.

POLICE
NPIPD
POLICE
NPIPD

DOCKING PRIVILEGES

Things are a little different at the starports of Shinkan. At each world the Travellers visit, they are asked if they want standard or premium docking. If they pick standard, their ship gets put into port in a risky location with lots of exposure to crime. If they pay for a premium docking bay, it looks much the same but their ship gets a slip in a safe region of the starport. Truly premium docking, with high-tech security and personnel, is reserved for the very well-to-do.

The *Ventura Fortuna*, with its posh accoutrements and exalted passenger list, qualifies for true premium. All the Travellers have to do is ask… and make a Difficult (10+) Carouse or Diplomat check (SOC) to get the desired docking privileges. It is not free but at least they can expect to return to a fully intact ship. The price for premium docking is Cr5000 per day multiplied by the Law Level of the world, with a minimum price of Cr5000 per day.

PARADIGM SHIFT OR STATUS QUO

In this adventure, the Travellers have the opportunity to become agents of change, or… guardians of the status quo. Shinkan stands out among the subsectors of the Core, not because it is technologically superior, possesses greater wealth, or has more historical significance. It stands out because it is a non-participant in the affairs of the wealthiest, most powerful and hallowed sector in the Imperium. It is a curious phenomenon that such a thing could exist so close to Capital and yet it does.

There are many reasons. Astrographically, Shinkan is located behind the 'wall' of semi-isolationist Sylean Worlds, whose neutrality and non-participation are aspects of its culture. Traffic directly from Capital and many of the other powerful systems in the sector is therefore obstructed by political astrography.

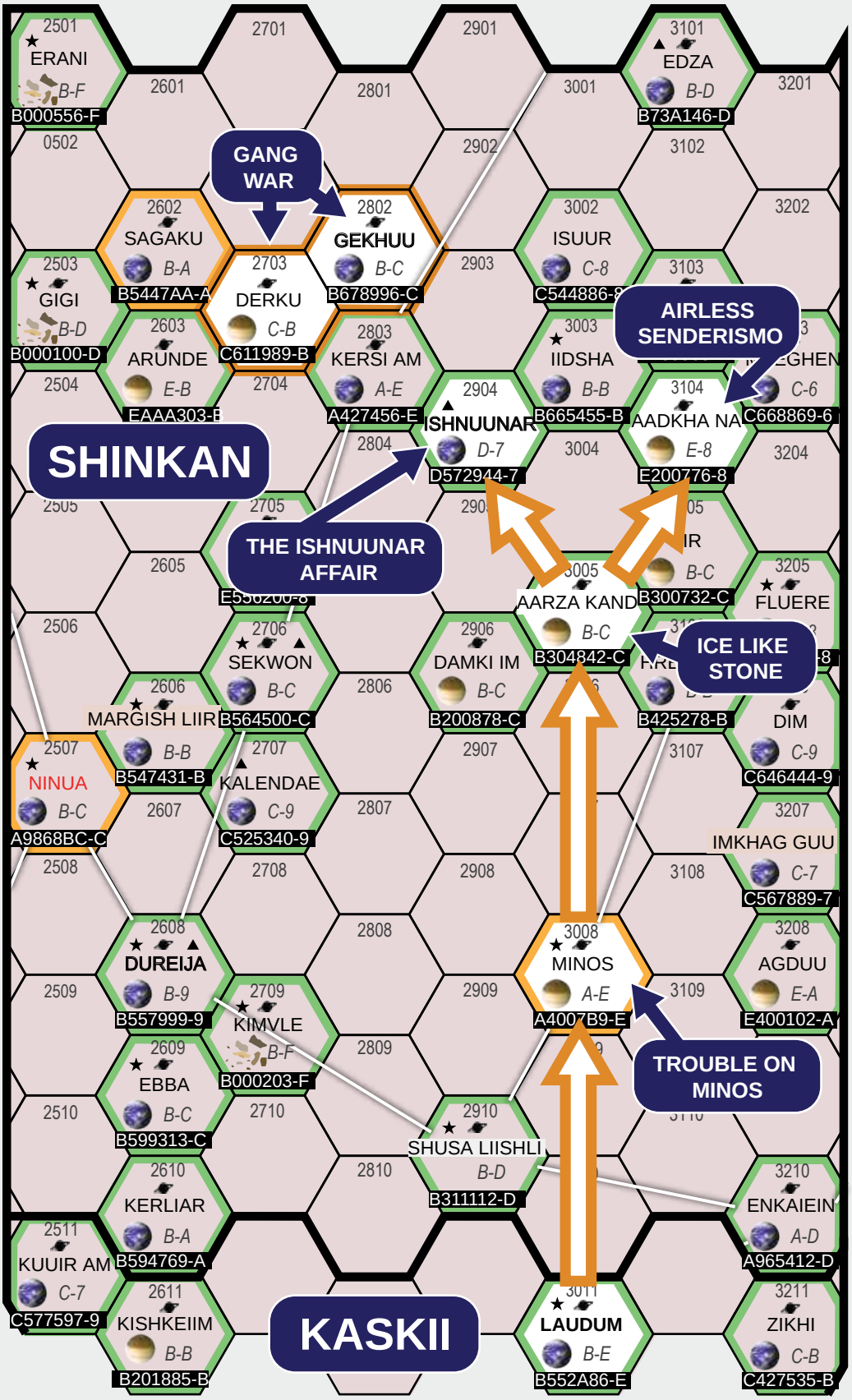
Neighbouring Ameros subsector has been in economic doldrums for decades. As such, Shinkan garners less trade flow than its surrounding subsectors. It is bordered by the insignificant Fornast, disinterested Lishun and taciturn Antares sectors, the latter of which facilitates a constant flow of immigrants and dissidents to the Core. Some believe that the League of Antares is using this as an opportunity to deliberately usher rabble rousers, criminals and terrorists into the sector. Antares has a bit of a rebellious streak and Shinkan has been a corridor for a 'soft insurrection' against the Imperium.

Whatever the reasons for Shinkan's unique style of governance, there are those who would like to bring the subsector into alignment with its neighbours, making it a full partner with the rest of the Core. Ironically, the forces for and against are not at all what might be expected. The NPIPD wants to maintain the status quo. While the foibles of Shinkan are largely beneath the interest of the Emperor, several ranking members of the Moot enable Shinkan by ensuring the appointment of malleable and disinterested nobles to its worlds. The tax profits flowing to Imperial coffers from Shinkan have been notably better under syndicate control than under the auspices of the nobility. To put it bluntly, Shinkan's gangsters do a better job of tax collection. While the NPIPD was expanded ostensibly to *remedy* criminality in the subsector, it ended up aiding and abetting it once it was discovered how efficiently the syndicates paid their dues to the Imperium. For decades, the NPIPD and the syndicates have been in lockstep but now one lone criminal organisation wants to break up this arrangement, resetting the game board so that Shinkan becomes an equal partner in Imperial affairs.

The Travellers find themselves in the position of 'kingmaker'. Their actions can direct the future of Shinkan. Whether they want the responsibility or not, they become embroiled in the underworld politics of the subsector and can change things for good or ill.

ASTROGATING SHINKAN

The path that this Departure takes is largely determined by the Travellers' choices and the allegiances they make. The Referee may use the following map to help navigate the events of the adventure. The events begin in earnest on Minos, followed most likely by Aarza Kand, but there is the potential for alterations in their course, depending on their actions.



- Gas Giant
- *B-6* Starport Class & Tech Level
- ★ Imperial Naval Base
- ▲ Imperial Scout Base
- Secure System
- Amber Zone
- X-boat Route
- Asteroids (no atmosphere/water)
- Planet (dry)
- Planet (water present)

TROUBLE ON MINOS

Being a cop for the NPIPD is not easy. One must perform the duties of the job – or at least maintain appearances of doing so – while trying to uphold the delicate balance between the various syndicates, all the while keeping pretenders to the throne at bay. Lieutenant Gauderi Szaken is just one of many diligent police officers who wholeheartedly commit their time and effort to the maintenance of a delicate subsector-wide web of graft and corruption, all in service to the Imperium. In Shinkan, the syndicates and gangs do the legwork of building the power structure, occasionally battling each other for supremacy, and the NPIPD enables and protects what they have built.

A good NPIPD cop must build an intelligence network. Like most officers, Lieutenant Szaken has a web of informants, spies and cronies who feed him the information he needs to help keep the 'right' people in power. When the Travellers arrive in Minos, Szaken is in the middle of an operation. He has acquired partial intel on the operations of a gang that is trying to make moves that could alter the balance of power. That gang is none other than the feared Ekilati Onati, a bit player who desperately want to become a major factor.

When the Travellers arrive at Minos aboard the *Ventura Fortuna*, Szaken is midway through a counterinsurgency operation, having partially infiltrated and destroyed an Ekilati Onati cell. Unfortunately for him, he has failed to collect all the information he needs to fully suppress the Vargr gangsters but he does have one key piece of information that leads him to the *Ventura Fortuna*. Apparently, there is something aboard their ship that is desired by one of Shinkan's major crime lords. He does not yet know that it is *The Bargain*.

Szaken's relationship with the Travellers is fluid. At first, he hopes to use them to find out what they have on their ship that is so important to the Ekilati Onati. If Szaken finds out what they have, he will not attempt to acquire it from them but will insist on keeping their ship impounded until he can determine who wants it, and how the transaction might affect the politics of Shinkan. If he does not figure out what they have, he will let them go and keep close tabs on them to see what happens next.

WHAT THEY KNOW AND WHEN

Keeping track of the various parties involved and what they know during this Departure can be difficult. The Referee may use the table below for clarification.

Who	Association	What They Know
Midipudi 'Victrix' Audua Odituili	Ishnuunar Mercantile Guilds	Victrix knows about her family heirloom, *The Bargain*, but she does not know it is on the *Ventura Fortuna*, nor that her former paramour has found it.
Andalario Vistume Enoula	Ishnuunar Mercantile Guilds	Enoula's agent, Mari Ygbo, has planted contraband aboard the *Ventura Fortuna* to get the ship impounded on Minos so that her boss can obtain it. Ygbo's confirmation of its presence on the ship is just now making it to Enoula on Ishnuunar. However, the message from Ygbo was intercepted by Ghorrd's spy cell.
Ghorrd	Ekilati Onati	Ghorrd's interception of the message from Ygbo gave him all the intel on *The Bargain*. Unfortunately, his cell was exposed by the NPIPD, who killed two of its members and detained a third.
Angngo Unge	Ekilati Onati	Angngo is the leader of the cell that intercepted Ygbo's message. She knows everything there is to know about *The Bargain*, including its location aboard the *Ventura Fortuna*. She was captured by the NPIPD and is being interrogated.
Niz and Nam	Derku and Gekhuu syndicates	The respective leaders of the Derku and Gekhuu crime syndicates. Neither knows about *The Bargain*.
Lieutenant Guderi Szaken	NPIPD	The NPIPD officer knows there is something to be had on the *Ventura Fortuna* but does not have any information about its value or by whom it is desired. The interrogation of Angngo has thus far failed to yield the information that he wants.

THE NPIPD

The worlds of the Imperium are connected by trade, transit and the Express Boat Network. For the most part, these worlds are independent entities whose governments do not extend beyond the orbits of their host stars. There are exceptions – colony worlds, occupied worlds and other subsidiaries of larger, more powerful worlds – but by and large, each star system in the Imperium is an island unto itself. Policing and safeguarding the worlds of the Imperium is normally the responsibility of the Imperial Navy. Not so in Shinkan.

Shinkan has an unusual agency that maintains order in the subsector and that agency is based on Ninua, the subsector capital. The NPIPD extends its tendrils far from its home planet. It has stations on many of Shinkan's worlds but is highly dependent on Imperial infrastructure to do its job. The NPIPD has few starship resources and no spaceports of its own, and therefore depends upon commercial transit and the occasional assistance of naval vessels, both Imperial and planetary.

The NPIPD is an institutional contradiction. Most subsectors do not have a police agency with an interstellar reach, yet that is exactly what the NPIPD has built; it sends its officers throughout the worlds of Shinkan, wielding the influence of the subsector capital as if it were a club, making arrests, extraditing suspects to Ninua for trial, and occasionally going so far as to reinterpret the laws of individual worlds as it sees fit. The NPIPD is a reckless interloper that routinely flouts Imperial law by intruding upon the affairs of allegedly independent worlds. It is enabled to do so by the Imperium itself.

This practice flies in the face of what the Imperium is all about; worlds with individual freedom, linked by free trade and few universal laws. However, the power vacuum in Shinkan has enabled this police force – whose original jurisdiction extended only to the borders of the Ninua system – to hold sway over the entire subsector.

Despite its well-intentioned charter, over time the criminal organisations that cowed the nobility and navy in Shinkan have corrupted the NPIPD as well. Initially, the agency did its job, making several noteworthy arrests which led to convictions but within a year or two things returned to their criminal norm. The NPIPD was corrupted not by the gangs but by the Imperium itself. The subsector duke turned over authority to the syndicates and the NPIPD became a practitioner of graft instead of ferreting it out and squelching it.

While the NPIPD has expanded significantly, it is not large enough to cover every world in the subsector. In addition to Ninua itself, the NPIPD has a significant presence on Derku, Gekhuu, Ishnuunar, Dureija, Minos, with a recently added station on Aarza Kand. The broad reach of the police agency stops abruptly at subsector borders.

Its primary tools are a legion of sophont detectives, robotic assistants, SHOCk cops and an array of vehicles, computers and other technology that it uses to maintain order in the subsector as it sees fit.

Drawn from the ranks of the NPIPD, the officers of the Strategic Handling Officer Cadre (SHOCk) are not known for subtlety. While they are allegedly trained as typical urban beat cops, they are more akin to soldiers on a police-action assignment. They handle most problems by shooting a gun at them. When the SHOCk cops are called to the scene, expect mayhem. While they are effective at intimidating and neutralising threats, they have a reputation for excess and the department has had to cover up some of their more heinous operations.

SHOCK COPS

		SKILLS
STR	(15)	AOC (police) 2
DEX	9	
END	9	
EQUIPMENT		Autopistol (3D-3), Autorifle (3D, Auto 2), Club (2D), Stunner (3D), two grenades (selected from aerosol, smoke, stun and tranq), Flak Shell (+8), Commdot, Subdermal Armour (+4), Combat Arm (Improved, STR 15, +4 Armour, melee or pistol fitting), Neural Comm (Improved, Audio/Visual, Computer/0)

YOU ARE UNDER ARREST!

Shortly after arrival in the Minos system, the Travellers are contacted by Minos Highport. The starport control officer goes through the usual rigmarole of confirming the ship's transponder data and then asks for their intentions. Will they be docking at the highport? Sending a shuttle? Maintaining geosynchronous orbit without docking? The *Ventura Fortuna* typically does not land at downports due to its hull configuration but Minos has no atmosphere, so planetside docking is an option. Whatever the case may be, the officer seems eager for the Travellers to get to the starport, even going so far as to offer special privileges like free docking and refuelling services. The Travellers may make an Average (8+) INT check to determine that something is amiss. The starport functionary's halting speech and occasional stammering betrays her. While this might give the Travellers reason to feel discomforted, there is not much they can do. Minos is a designated port of call on the Antarean Spur and presumably they must dock and refuel. However, getting the sense that they are about to have some trouble gives them the opportunity to prepare for it.

There is the possibility that a wily group of Travellers – who have fuel reserves in the ship – might jump out of the system or make a microjump elsewhere in Minos but doing so puts them in a precarious position, evading the law as it were. However, there is room in the narrative for such an approach and Traveller agency is a key component of every good adventure. The Referee should read the entire Departure to determine what the consequences and subsequent events might be for such a brash move.

As they get within 10 diameters of Minos, they are notified that their ship has been flagged for inspection by the NPIPD and are assigned a docking bay in a sequestered area of Minos' immense highport. Lieutenant Gauderi Szaken is their point of contact and they are given his comms data should they want to speak with him beforehand. Otherwise, they will meet him when he arrives with his cadre of investigators.

Szaken intends to perform a full – and very intrusive – investigation of the ship, using SHOCk cops and robots. If the Travellers reach out to him and make a Difficult (10+) Advocate or Diplomat check (SOC) they can reduce the boarding party to Szaken and a mere half dozen of his investigatory robots. The results will be the same; Szaken finds the evidence he needs to detain their ship but a less aggressive boarding party might reduce the chances of conflict between the NPIPD and the Travellers. What Szaken really wants is more time to figure out the mystery of *The Bargain*, the art piece that is coveted by multiple gangs in Shinkan. He only has partial intelligence about the *Ventura Fortuna* and does not yet know why the famous starliner is so important to so many people. Given more time, he believes he can figure out what the Travellers have but he can only do that if he detains their ship.

Szaken arrives aboard a modular cutter, fitted with a cargo transport module (refer to *High Guard*). The cutter is not armed with offensive weaponry but there are plenty of lethally armed SDBs and frigates in the area ready to assist should any problems arise. The cutter is a bit of a Trojan horse, a seemingly innocuous vessel sent to inspect their ship but its contents are anything but benign. Szaken controls a swarm of drones and robots that can rapidly inspect every nook and cranny of the ship. He also brings a squad of SHOCk cops, aggressive and trigger-happy cyborg police officers.

The pretence for boarding the ship is Ygbo's cargo, contraband that will allow Szaken to impound the ship and detain the Travellers. Szaken has been tipped off to its existence and intends to use it for these purposes. If the Travellers have somehow already discovered Ygbo's contraband, Szaken's robots and drones plant new evidence. A crafty group of Travellers might be able to wriggle their way out of this situation, or even catch Szaken in the act of planting evidence, but otherwise, nothing short of a Formidable (14+) Advocate, Admin or Diplomat check (SOC) is going to deter Szaken and the NPIPD, and even then their ship will be detained, albeit for a shorter period of time.

Szaken is friendly and confident. Why should he not be? He has false evidence on the Travellers' ship that guarantees his desired outcome. Despite his seemingly friendly disposition, his drones and robots aggressively enter and infiltrate the ship, scouring every corner, eventually making their way into the cargo hold to find Ygbo's planted evidence. Meanwhile a squad of SHOCk cops are there to intimidate the Travellers, crew and passengers, and to make sure that the inspection goes as Szaken plans.

For Szaken, the SHOCkops, and the NPIPD robotic investigator corps, see page 138.

OPPORTUNITY KNOCKS

On their way in from 100 diameters, the Travellers have the opportunity to disengage the *Velos tis Alitheia* if the Travellers know about its presence. The ship is stealthy enough to evade detection by Minos system defence craft if they launch it before reaching 50 diameters or so.

If they do not already know about the *Velos*, this is an excellent opportunity for Naalir, using its Captain Eilerfaust avatar, to inform the Travellers of the breakaway ship. He does not suggest that they escape but merely makes its presence known so that the Travellers can make their own decision. The rest of their questions can be answered later!

After finding the planted evidence, Szaken informs the Travellers that their ship will be impounded but he explains that their cooperation can ameliorate any fines and punishment. If they are willing to work with the NPIPD, he is sure that he can liberate their ship quickly. Otherwise, it might remain in port for up to six months while a full investigation takes place. This could ruin the reputation of the *Ventura Fortuna*, which has run unhindered for decades as a Core luxury liner.

If they accept Szaken's offer, they are impressed into service as NPIPD deputies. Their first assignment is to help interrogate a detained member of the Ekilati Onati. However, if they refuse, there are many avenues to an alternate approach. The Travellers might use the Diplomat skill to wriggle their way out of detention, Stealth and Recon to make a sneaky escape, or some other approach. While this adventure identifies one path for the narrative, Travellers are welcome to use creativity to alter that path.

Determine what the contraband planted on the *Ventura Fortuna* is. The Referee may select from the Illegal Goods section of the Trade chapter in the *Traveller Core Rulebook*, or simply roll on the Contraband table.

Contraband

2D	Description
2	Otherwise common goods that are illegal only on a specific world
3	Otherwise common goods that are illegal only on a localised collection of worlds
4	Otherwise common goods that are illegal only in the subsector
5	Stolen goods of moderate value being fenced
6	Stolen goods of high value being fenced
7	Stolen goods of exorbitant value being fenced
8	Illegal luxury items
9	Illegal life forms or biochemicals
10	Illegal or counterfeit technology
11	Illegal drugs
12	Illegal weapons

THE SUSPECT

If the Travellers opt to work with Lieutenant Szaken, he lets them in on a little secret. The intelligence that he obtained came from a transmission that was originally sent from *their* ship, the *Ventura Fortuna*. It was sent via private courier when the liner was on Laudum and arrived a few days ago, just ahead of their arrival. Messages sent by x-boat are highly secure and difficult to intercept between endpoints. However, private couriers sometimes back up messages at sites along a route between endpoints, creating the opportunity for interception. That is exactly what happened at Minos.

The message was intended for the Ishnuunar Mercantile Guilds, based on Ishnuunar. As Szaken describes it, 'guild' is a euphemism for a federation of organised crime rackets. The structure differs from those of its associates on Derkhu and Gerkhuu, which are referred to as syndicates.

Unbeknownst to the Travellers, the message was sent by Mari Ygbo, who is in Enoula's employ. She deliberately informed the NPIPD that the *Ventura Fortuna* was carrying contraband (that she planted) in an attempt to get the liner impounded at Minos. The intercepted message will continue on its way, taking another two weeks to reach Ishnuunar.

NINUA TACTICAL POLICE VEHICLE (NTPV)

Wherever they are deployed, NPIPD units bring multiple NTPVs with them for transportation and pursuit purposes. The vehicle's excessive armament exceeds that which is allowed on many worlds but the reach and influence of the NPIPD throughout Shinkan usually lets them get away with deploying them nonetheless.

TL	12
SKILL	Flyer (grav)
AGILITY	+4
SPEED (CRUISE)	Very Fast (Fast)
RANGE (CRUISE)	3,000 (4,500)
CREW	2
PASSENGERS	—
CARGO	0.25 tons
HULL	32
SHIPPING	8 tons
COST	MCr1.441

EQUIPMENT AND WEAPONS

Autopilot (advanced), Communications Systems (advanced, encrypted, satellite uplink, tightbeam), Computer/1, Control System (enhanced), Fire Extinguishers, Navigation System (improved), Prismatic Aerosol Discharger, Sensor Systems (improved), Smoke Discharger, Stealth (basic)

ARMOUR

FRONT	20	REAR	14	SIDES	16

EQUIPMENT	
Autopilot (skill level)	3
Communications (range)	1,000km
Navigation (Navigation DM)	+1
Sensors (Electronics (sensors) DM)	—
Camouflage (Recon DM)	—
Stealth (Electronics (sensors) DM)	—

WEAPONS	RANGE	DAMAGE	MAGAZINE	TRAITS	FIRE CONTROL
Heavy Machinegun	1	4D	100	Auto 3	+2
Riot Stunner	10	8D	10	Stun, Zero-G, Blast 10	+2

Szaken informs them that the Ishnuunar Mercantile Guilds is dominated by Vistume Enoula, a Threep (an alien species who originate from Othsekuu in Lishun) who has consolidated power through intimidation, violence, and… some sound business practices. He says that the NPIPD has this organisation under surveillance and that they are working to abate criminal activity. Szaken is, of course, lying. Publicly, the NPIPD is a law enforcement agency but corruption and graft have reduced them to the role of caretaker and peacemaker in crime-ridden Shinkan.

The Travellers might have no reason to doubt Lieutenant Szaken. However, if one or more of them suspects that the lieutenant is less than completely forthright, allow them to make an opposed check, using his Deception skill versus the Travellers' highest Deception or INT. Success with Effect 0 gives the Travellers the impression that Szaken is lying but no further information. Effect 1+ means the Travellers spot several 'tells' in Szaken's speech that indicate he is lying. Whether or not the Travellers identify Szaken as a liar, he tells them a story:

The Ekilati Onati Vargr crime organisation, from Aarza Kand, is making waves in Shinkan and has enforcers and spies planted all over its worlds. Someone in the Ekilati sent a three-person cell of operators to Minos to collect intelligence on Enoula. We intercepted the message but we've only been able to decipher a small piece of it. Two members of the Ekilati team were killed by one of our SHOCk squads but the other one survived. We have her in detention.

Her name is Angngo and we've subjected her to rigorous interrogation techniques, but thanks to inhibitors woven into her nervous system, she has not given up the intel we want. I'm not sure we can break her and the intensity of the process might kill her or turn her mind to mush. We're considering simulation therapy, in which the subject is put through… experiences in a simulated environment to break them down, but we're afraid what it might do to her brain. We want the intel but can't get it with our techniques. Can you help us?

The Travellers might refuse his request but if they do, Szaken will sweeten the deal by revoking the impound order on the *Ventura Fortuna,* provided they successfully acquire intel from Angngo first.

If the Travellers help the lieutenant, they get the chance to talk to Angngo. One or more of the Travellers are transported in a police vehicle to a 'black site' a few kilometres from Minos Downport, in a run-down part of the startown. Angngo is being held in an old warehouse that is guarded by a squad of eight SHOCk Cops. She does not look good. She has been savagely tortured and beaten, and yet is no closer to giving up any information. Despite her condition, Angngo figures out that the Travellers are not officially affiliated with any branch of the NPIPD, which gives them an opening to establish trust with her. Obviously, she will know they are in the employ of the NPIPD but if the Travellers can convince her that they are neutral or sympathetic to her cause, they might be able to learn something from her.

If the Travellers have a psionic among them, obtaining useful information will be easier but Angngo is not in good shape and a psionic probe of her mind does not provide the clear-cut information they might be hoping for. Despite her inhibitors, which block physical pain, the psychological effect of seeing her body put through all sorts of horrific tortures has unsettled her mind.

TIER 1

If the Travellers can establish a rapport with Angngo, she will cooperate with them. At first, Angngo will attempt to deceive them, so convert any skill checks into opposed checks versus her Deception skill. If the Travellers can convince her that they are sympathetic to her cause, roll 1D to determine one or more items of information given by Angngo.

TIER 2

Obtaining information from Tier 2 requires a successful Difficult (10+) Persuade or Carouse check (1D hours, INT or SOC). Success with Effect 0–5 reveals one item from the Tier 2 list. Effect 6+ reveals two items. In either case, Angngo will not say anything unless the Travellers prevent any surveillance technology from recording the conversation; the NPIPD is watching and recording the entire thing with hidden devices.

The Travellers have choices to make if they successfully obtain information from Angngo. They will begin to understand the situation in Shinkan better. They might also understand that the *Ventura Fortuna* and its very important piece of art, are keys to the situation.

Tier 1 Information

1D	Result
1	Szaken and almost every other NPIPD officer receive bribes from the guilds and syndicates.
2	Her boss is the Vargr the NPIPD calls the 'Shadow Wolf' but she does not say his true name.
3	Angngo and the Ekilati Onati believe they have the key to break up all the racketeering in Shinkan. The NPIPD is trying to stop them.
4	The key to the Ekilati Onati's plans is on the *Ventura Fortuna*. If the Travellers tell her that the *Ventura* is their ship, she tells them that if Szaken finds out what they have, he will have no further use for them and might not lift the impound order.
5	An associate of Vistume Enoula, the leader of the Ishnuunari Mercantile Guild, is a person of interest. Angngo had hoped to inform her boss about this but was captured first.
6	The Shadow Wolf, has a secret base somewhere on Aarza Kand.

Tier 2 Information

1D	Result
1	The Shadow Wolf's real name is Vaerzza Ghorrdzaerskourz, a.k.a. 'Ghorrd'. He was thought to be a low-level functionary but is actually a leading figure in the Ekilati Onati.
2	The NPIPD is certain that Ghorrd is dead because he was killed by a SHOCk Cops squad. They are not wrong but they are also not entirely correct. See The Epic Tale of Vaerzza Ghorrdzaerskourz on page 120 for more information.
3	Enoula's mysterious associate – the 'person of interest' in Tier 1 – is an Aezorgh female known as Victrix. Her current whereabouts are unknown.
4	The *Ventura Fortuna* possesses a piece of art called *The Bargain*. It is an abstract mural that depicts the events of the Imperial Civil War. This object is desired by Enoula.
5	Same as #4, above, but the Travellers may make an Average (8+) Art check (EDU) to determine which art piece it is.
6	The approximate location of Ghorrd's secret base on Aarza Kand.

The intel that they learn is key to some of the following phases of the adventure. If, for example, they do not learn that Ghorrd operates out of Aarza Kand, they might find themselves at a dead end. However, it is common knowledge that the Ekilati Onati are headquartered on that planet, so they might be able to obtain this information from other sources, such as a Streetwise check or a conversation with Lieutenant Szaken.

BREAKOUT!

As the Travellers wrap up their interrogation of Angngo, they hear an explosion elsewhere in the warehouse. Ghorrd has sent one of his clones, along with a squad of eight Ekilati Onati enforcers, to liberate Angngo. The squad blasts their way in with explosives on one corner of the building and must make their way through several rooms to get to the prisoner. The Ghorrd clone is equipped with battle dress and a stagger laser rifle, making him a formidable foe.

This event may occur during or after the Travellers' interrogation of Angngo. If it occurs during the interrogation, the Travellers may be drawn into the firefight, although a direct encounter with the battle dress-clad Ghorrd is not recommended unless the Travellers are equally well-equipped. If it occurs afterward, Szaken notifies the Travellers that it is happening and calls them back to the facility to help the police fight off the attack. With a shortage of SHOCk cops at his disposal, he asks any Travellers with combat experience to help the police defeat the assault. Should the latter occur, they arrive in time to see Ghorrd escaping with Angngo, and may attempt to foil the escape, or simply let it happen.

If the assault happens during their interrogation, and the Travellers have been kind or even sympathetic to Angngo, she prevents the Ekilati assault team from attacking them. Otherwise, she does not intervene on their behalf. Should the Ekilati team manage to get Angngo out of the building, they make their way to a small craft transport a few kilometres away with which they intend to make a hasty escape to orbit.

EKILATI ONATI ENFORCERS

		SKILLS
STR	9	AOC (soldiers) 2
DEX	10	
END	7	
EQUIPMENT		Autopistol (3D-3), Sawed-off Shotgun (4D, Bulky), Blade (2D), Fighter Set (Kforzhazuk, +3), Internal Null Field, Commdot

The basic thugs of the Ekilati Onati are ruthless, usually working in small groups of three or four individuals and carrying out their orders with painstaking precision. The Ekilati have not forged a niche for themselves by being careless. Their enforcers are exceedingly loyal. Those who betray the pack meet a horrific death and have their fangs removed and displayed as jewellery by their killers.

WHAT ARE THE PASSENGERS DOING?!

With all the problems the Travellers encounter, it is easy to forget that they are running a luxury liner. The Referee may incorporate various passenger elements into the adventure, as described in Running a Luxury Liner on page 46 of the *Singularity Sourcebook*, or simply delegate the responsibility to Naalir's android crew. Whichever option is selected, it is important to remember that the passengers are always part of the story in Act 1. They are an exclusive group of people and expect to be treated with great deference no matter the circumstances. They unanimously agreed to add the Antarean Spur to their voyage and expect to enjoy the experience with visits to ports of call, excursions and so on.

If the *Ventura Fortuna* spends most of the adventure impounded on Minos, then the Referee has little choice but to delegate passenger responsibilities to the crew but if the ship is liberated, then it can be part of the Travellers' subsequent encounters and events as they make their way through Shinkan. This can add additional layers of complication to the storyline. The Travellers experience various facets of Imperial culture, society and politics as they make their way through the Core and the passengers add additional flavour to those experiences.

AFTER THE FIRE

The next step in the adventure is highly fluid. The Travellers have become embroiled in the machinations of multiple criminal enterprises. They have seen that the NPIPD is willing to use brutal tactics against their enemies, including torture. If they have allied themselves with the NPIPD, they might be having second thoughts. Shinkan is a swamp of criminal enterprise and the Travellers might recognise that they have to get their hands dirty no matter with whom they align themselves.

Angngo is a member of the Ekilati Onati – a dangerous crime organisation – but comes across as honest, possibly even noble. It is important to keep in mind that Angngo and Ghorrd do not see themselves as criminals. They see themselves as entrepreneurs, making a living the only way they can under the circumstances. Immigrants from the poorer quarters of Antares are not often welcomed with open arms. Being Ekilati Onati means demanding your just due. They are breaking laws but many Vargr believe that the laws are unfairly stacked against them.

If the Travellers approach her diplomatically, she recognises something in them that encrouages her trust and if things go well, she provides usable information. If they were respectful to her, Ghorrd reaches out to them after the assault and rescue attempt. Note that this happens *whether or not* Ghorrd survives the assault. There is more to him than meets the eye and if he is harmed or even killed, he somehow manages to communicate with the Travellers afterward. See The Epic Tale of Vaerzza Ghorrdzaerskourz on page 120 for more information about Ghorrd's 'immortality'.

Depending on how the Travellers' interaction with Angngo goes and what happens during the breakout, they are faced with two options: work with Ghorrd or the NPIPD. Ghorrd will reach out to the them to request their cooperation in an effort to dismantle the Ishnuunar mob. He presents this as an opportunity to break up the power structure in Shinkan and remove several layers of corruption. He invites them to Aarza Kand to help him strategise. Meanwhile, Szaken also wants the Travellers to go to Aarza Kand but he wants them to infiltrate and destroy Ghorrd and his branch of the Ekilati Onati. If they have not yet managed to negotiate for the return of their ship, Szaken holds that out as bait, offering to lift the impound order if they cooperate.

To sum it up, the Travellers can align themselves with the reigning law enforcement agency or a would-be Robin Hood, a criminal enterprise that hopes to shake things up and, ironically, transform Shinkan into a more typical Imperial subsector.

WILDCARD

Siding with a criminal organisation, even one that appears to be on the 'right' side of things, could be a difficult pill to swallow for the Travellers. At this point in the adventure, they might have begun to understand that there are no 'white knights' in this scenario, that just about everyone involved has an angle, and each is operating in their own self interest. Just as things begin to become complicated, the intercession of yet another party makes things even more complex.

Dilumna Villa, a corporate agent of Achenaar-Antilles, makes contact with the Travellers on Minos. Villa does not inform them who her employer is, preferring to keep things confidential. However, she does tell them that she is well connected with the Minos Port Authority and has learned what happened to their ship. She says she can get the ship out of impound but only if they help her achieve her goal, which is to exempt Achenaar-Antilles from the syndicate protection network. If the Travellers promise to help her do this, she will wield her influence to get the ship out of hock.

If the Travellers make a deal with Villa, and successfully make a deal on behalf of Achenaar-Antilles, they are granted Corporate Favour DMs during the Favour assessment at the end of the adventure.

Note to the Referee: Be careful when adding yet more complexity to this scenario with the addition of the Wildcard corporate agent. Some groups of Travellers can become affected by 'analysis paralysis' when presented with too many options. The group splits into factions and no one can agree on which way to go. Traveller groups with one or two strong leaders, or groups that tend to agree on most things, can handle additional complexity but if the group tends to split when faced with more choices, it might be best to refrain from adding this wildcard.

This Departure is a voyage into the underworld, with shady characters, dirty deals and corruption everywhere. The goal is to show that not every region of Imperial space blithely participates in the status quo.

ICE LIKE STONE

Aarza Kand is a small vacuum world with large frozen oceans covering 40% of its surface. The planet is heavily urbanised, with over 400 million inhabitants living in several large cities and thousands of 'factory towns' dedicated to various forms of resource extraction. Habitations are not limited to only land masses and include many on or under the ice plains. Since the world is in the outer reaches of the habitable zone of its binary stellar pair, its ice remains solid year-round and serves as a stable surface for small urban centres.

Aarza Kand has no single capital city but instead a collection of regional capitals, all of which have their own governors. The planet could almost be classified as balkanised with five nations, each of which maintain a distinct personality and mode of government. The five combine to elect one central government with the citizens of each nation voting for a world president and cabinet ministers.

The starports of Aarza Kand are efficient utilitarian affairs, competent but unappealing. The highport features a grey, tri-level hub-and-spokes architecture, designed to manage maximum throughput in a busy region of space. It could easily have incorporated a shipyard, upgrading from Class B to A, but it seemed unnecessary to the technocrats who commissioned the structure because nearby Kersi Am and Minos have monopolised starship construction in the interstellar region. Some view this as an oversight. The market for mid-tech ships is strong and not everyone wants to pay a premium for high-tech ships whose superior fusion power plants and hull materials are more expensive. Aarza Kand might have filled that gap amicably had they invested in shipyards.

The downport, at the city of Takhadz, is an equally pedestrian affair, designed to serve traders who come to buy and sell goods, and sublight ships commuting from different parts of the star system. The system's two planetoid belts, gas giants, gas giant moons and 10 planets are all occupied by resource extraction firms. There is a great deal of in-system traffic and Takhadz Downport is the main beneficiary. The Travellers' arrival will go unheralded if they make planetfall in the *Ventura Fortuna* launch but if they dock in the *Velos tis Alitheia* or *Ventura Fortuna*, they attract a great deal of attention.

Once at the downport, they can make their way to other parts of the planet via supersonic grav vehicles that make the entire surface accessible within three hours or less. Almost all commercial flights are free but require a reservation of three days or more. Getting to the outback is a little trickier and might require a rental, usually a lesser-quality Very Fast or Subsonic vehicle. If the Travellers managed to learn the clue about Ghorrd's location from Angngo or from the instance of Ghorrd that they encountered on Minos, then they have some idea where to go: the icy ocean plains. Figuring out which one will require additional investigation.

They can either hit the streets of Takhadz to make contacts with the Ekilati Onati, or simply orbit the planet searching for anomalies under the frozen ocean shelves. If they have access to the *Velos tis Alitheia*, it has advanced sensors, including a densitometer. The Referee may assign an appropriate Electronics (sensors) or Science check to determine whether they are able to find the base. Regardless of which method they choose, once they have pinpointed the likely spot, they might want to acquire slower transportation, such as a solar sailer (a solar-powered icecraft that glides along the surface on large skate blades).

If they came to Aarza Kand with minimal information, it is considerably more difficult to perform the investigation. To find Ghorrd's base before hitting the ice, they must make a Very Difficult (12+) Streetwise check (1D days, INT), diving deeply into the underworld to make contacts within the ranks of the Ekilati Onati, and to obtain clues that lead them to the hidden base. They must be careful, though, lest they cross the wrong enforcer and end up in trouble with the gang. The Ekilati are not known for mercy to their enemies, and if they suspect that the Travellers are informants or assassins, they will not go easy on them. The difficulty of the task can be mitigated by allowing an appropriate task chain if the Referee desires.

If the Travellers fail to find the base after several days, possibly becoming frustrated with their lack of success, all is not lost. Their investigations have attracted the attention of Ghorrd's informants and he reaches out to them with an invitation to his lair. However, Ghorrd is no fool. He gives them the directions to a place near his base without giving them exact coordinates. If the Travellers travel the ice, he will send operatives to meet with them once they are close.

AARZA KAND

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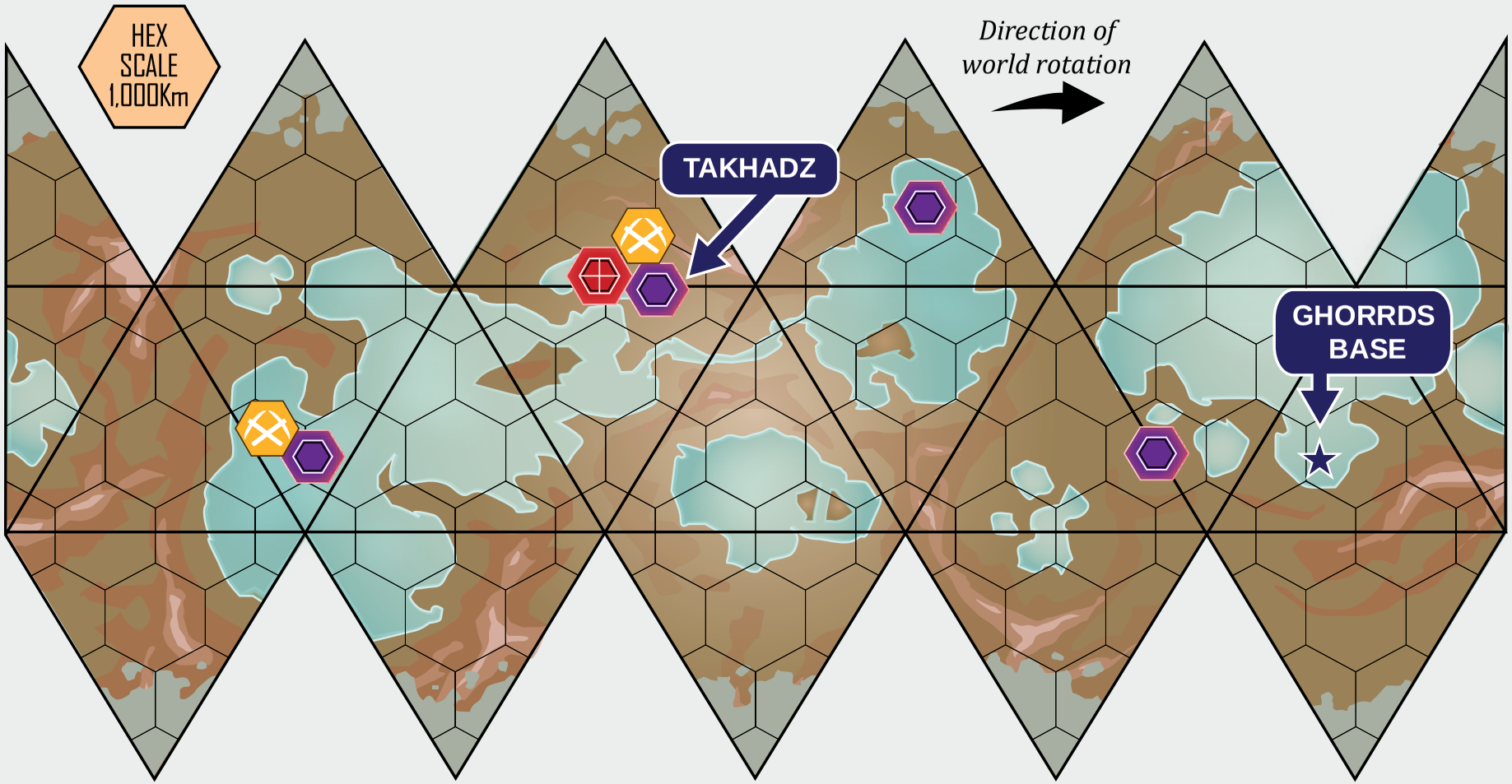


Settlements Downport Industry

SOLAR SAILER

On Aarza Kand, the locals use a highly unusual form of transportation in the outback of their vacuum world. Solar sailers glide across the open ice plains using solar-charged batteries as their power source. These vehicles meet the surface of the icy plains with large skating blades. Solar sailers are described as boats since they travel the oceans but that is not quite accurate. However, should they encounter slurry or briny seas, the solar sailer can dip its blades into the water and becoming a traditional boat.

While Aarza Kand hosts a modern technological society, as one departs the cities, it can be a dangerous place. Despite the availability and greater efficacy of grav vehicles, they are rarely used for traversing the open space of the ice plains. Too many bandits, insurgents and other undesirables frequent these zones, and more than one has successfully brought down an aerial vehicle with a lucky shot. Staying at ground level and using the fog banks as cover, travel by solar sail is deemed best under the circumstances.

TL	12
SKILL	Seafarer (personal)
AGILITY	-1
SPEED (CRUISE)	Medium (Slow)
RANGE (CRUISE)	400 (600)
CREW	2
PASSENGERS	6
CARGO	4.25 tons
HULL	60
SHIPPING	15 tons
COST	Cr513000

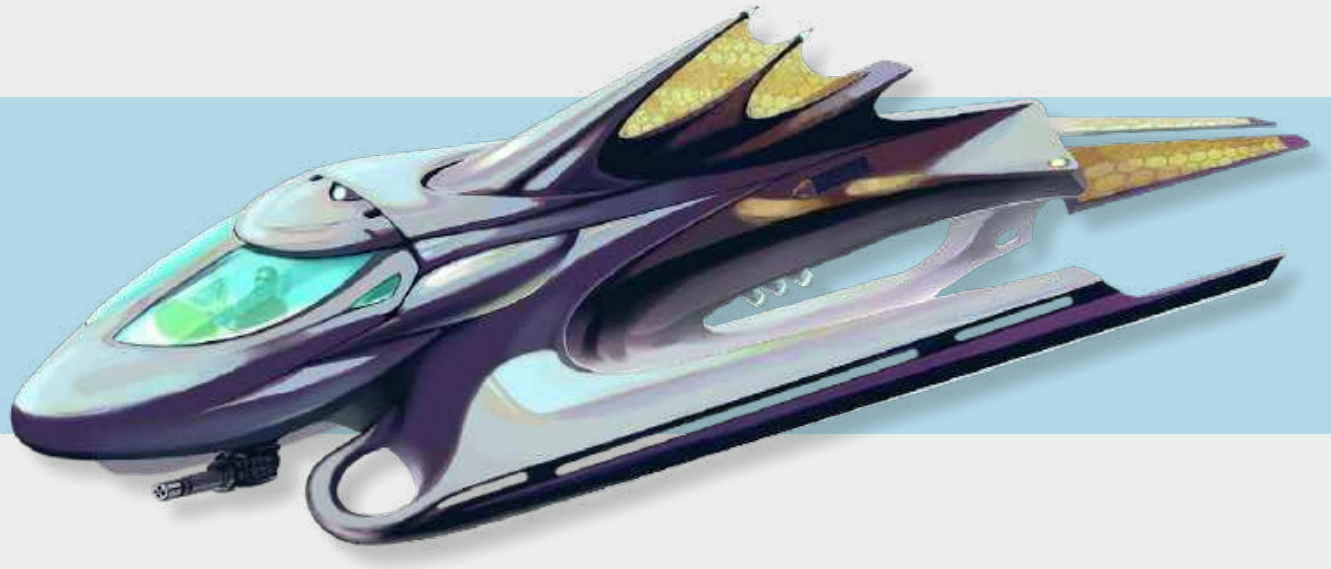
EQUIPMENT AND WEAPONS

Actuation System, Airlock, Communications Systems (improved), Control System (improved), Fire Extinguishers, Fusion Plant (advanced), Hydrofoil, Navigation System (basic), Pintle Mount (machinegun, front), Sensor Systems (basic), Vacuum Environment Protection

ARMOUR

FRONT	8	REAR	8	SIDES	8

EQUIPMENT	
Autopilot (skill level)	—
Communications (range)	500km
Navigation (Navigation DM)	+1
Sensors (Electronics (sensors) DM)	+0
Camouflage (Recon DM)	—
Stealth (Electronics (sensors) DM)	—



WEAPON	RANGE	DAMAGE	MAGAZINE	TRAITS	FIRE CONTROL
Machinegun	0.5	3D	60 (660)	Auto 4	+1

Where the ice sheets are thinner, cities have been built around drilling operations that penetrate deeply enough to reach liquid water, heated by deep-sea thermal vents. Miraculously, native microscopic life exists in these briny seas. Some species mass on the rocks and in the silt, and are extracted and consumed for their protein content by the locals. Most have little flavour without the addition of spices and condiments but many Aarza Kandians swear by their nutritional content, ascribing almost magical properties to them. Because of these beliefs and the difficulty of extracting them from the depths, they are expensive on the open market and therefore consumed mostly by the upper class.

In addition to being a resource-extraction world, Aarza Kand is a mercantile hub, located between the Syndicate Worlds to coreward and the markets of Dureija and Minos to rimward. The gangs, guilds and syndicates that run the industrial worlds of the subsector initially overlooked smaller worlds like Aarza Kand, leaving a power vacuum that was filled by the Ekilati Onati.

The rise of the Ekilati Onati went unnoticed for some time, allowing them to situate themselves at the top of the pecking order. This was allowed by the NPIPD until the Vargr gangsters proved intractable. They were unwilling to take bribes from the larger gangs and refused to play along with the existing power structure. The Ekilati have bigger ambitions in the subsector but there is the possibility that a schism in their ranks can be exploited by the NPIPD and the other organisations.

There are two factions among the Ekilati: the traditional Aekhadze pack and the heretical Ghorrdzaerskourz faction, led by Ghorrd. Their elusive leader was thought to have been killed in an air/raft bomb but somehow rose from the dead to reassume control of his faction. Subsequent encounters with this gangster have also seemingly resulted in his death but he repeatedly reappears, continually chasing his ambitions to establish the Ekilati as a major player, on par with the syndicate and guild lords. *All* of the Ekilati could benefit from Ghorrd's success but the Aekadze faction is more interested in retaining control than boosting the profile of the gang.

IT'S JUST BUSINESS

The Travellers may have come to Aarza Kand to seek out the elusive Ghorrd for one of two reasons: to ally themselves with him… or to destroy him.

If the Travellers are in Lieutenant Szaken's employ, they might come to Aarza Kand to investigate the mysterious Shadow Wolf. They might even know his true identity if they successfully interrogated Angngo. If the Travellers are working with Lieutenant Szaken, and he knows they have gone to Aarza Kand, he requests that they assassinate Ghorrd.

As described in The Epic Tale of Vaerzza Ghorrdzaerskourz, the remnant of Ghorrd is a digitised consciousness contained in a computer substrate. He knows that the Travellers interrogated Angngo. Ghorrd would like to recruit the Travellers to his side. He wants to restore Shinkan to a more natural state, in which it ceases to be an outlier and begins to participate in Core's affairs. Ghorrd will reach out to the Travellers, either through one of his clones, one of his enforcers, or in direct communication with his source instance via a comms device or computer. If the Travellers take Lieutenant Szaken up on his offer to assassinate Ghorrd, then Ghorrd attempts to change their minds when they show up to kill him. Ghorrd views the Travellers as the lynchpin that his plans depend upon and would rather be allies than enemies. They possess *The Bargain*, and are therefore the key to dislodging Enoula and the mercantile guilds of Ishnuunar from their position atop the criminal food chain in Shinkan.

Ghorrd is a wily and clever gangster with a bit of the wheeler-dealer in him. He believes that everyone has their strengths and weaknesses, and that by appealing to *both*, they can be convinced to serve him. Ghorrd's initial play is to appeal to the Travellers' sense of order and justice, offering a way to help Shinkan assimilate with the Core. If the Travellers seem averse to the idea, he tries to determine what *does* motivate them, and then uses *that* as leverage to sway them to his cause.

THE EPIC TALE OF VAERZZA GHORRDZAERSKOURZ

Like many Irilotok Vargr migrants to the Core, Ghorrdzaerskourz first earned a living doing jobs that humans and other established residents would just as soon avoid. He mined asteroids, performed manual labour in dangerous low-tech factories, cleaned up hazardous waste on the Syndicate Worlds and eventually found his way into the Ekilati Onati, the Irilotok crime organisation that makes its Credits running protection rackets in their ethnic communities, fencing stolen and smuggled goods, selling narcotics, engaging in sophont trafficking and mining asteroids with dubious claims.

While most Vargr in the Ekilati Onati advance by demonstrating their brutality, Ghorrdzaerskourz was different. Known as Vaerz to his friends, Ghorrd to his business associates and the legendary 'Shadow Wolf' to his adversaries, he showed a capacity to use violence when necessary but is known more for diplomacy, cunning and most of all, undeniable charisma. He came up through the ranks of the Aekhadze Pack, a middling group of crime families who claimed that their Irilotok ethnic purity made them superior to the other gangs in the Ekilati. Whatever the veracity of these claims, it did not measurably change their fortunes. They languished as a mediocre pack for most of their existence, until Ghorrd became a key Aekhadze lieutenant.

Unlike his insular pack mates, Ghorrd built relationships outside the Ekilati Onati, forging ties with non-Vargr criminal organisations, legitimate corporations and the petty bickering governments of Shinkan. Ghorrd used his contacts and allies to 'divide and conquer' exposing internecine conflicts and grievances to keep them busy fighting each other while the Ekilati Onati increased its holdings.

Like so many epic tales, Ghorrd's rapid rise to power met with an equally precipitous fall. Ghorrd was not naïve. He was very sensitive to the power structures he so carefully cultivated and navigated, but success sometimes breeds jealousy and that is what caused his eventual demise. Before he could be crowned leader of the Aekhadze organisation, he was assassinated by an envious packmate, Dhakhedi Aekhadze, who alleged to have a more authentic claim to the top spot. Ghorrd anticipated this and had created a contingency plan. With technology acquired from Minos, Ghorrd copied – and enhanced – his intellect and consciousness, creating a digital copy of it to install into clones of his original body.

Death, as it turns out, was just the beginning for Ghorrd. It might even be said that he has been *more* successful in death than in life. At any given time, Ghorrd has anywhere from five to 20 cloned versions of himself in circulation, spread throughout the subsector. While he has a 'super Vargr' template, Ghorrd prefers exact copies of his natural physique to artificially enhanced ones. The copies are physically identical and imbued with a consciousness template based on the source, but each has slight alterations that differentiate them. When two Ghorrd clones are together in the same room, they will certainly agree on most things but close observation will reveal that they have slightly different behaviours. They behave more like pack brothers than identical clones. The closest approximation to Ghorrd's true personality resides in a computer substrate located in a bunker deep below the granite-hard ice of Aarza Kand's frozen plains. The only way to speak with this 'true' version of Ghorrd is to establish a connection with the computer and enter a simulated environment. Refer to Into the Sim on page 90 of the *Singularity Sourcebook* for more information.

Ghorrd has two major weaknesses that can be exploited. His source consciousness exists only in the substrates hidden in his bunker, with no other copies elsewhere. He is well aware of the existential danger he has put himself in but his consciousness has an ego. It refuses to accept the notion of rival versions of itself and insists on being the singular 'master copy'. Should an enemy gain access to the facility and destroy the 'source Ghorrd', it would effectively kill him, leaving only whichever extant clones there are in circulation. Subsequently rounding copies up and incarcerating or killing them would end Ghorrd's ambitions for the Ekilati.

The second weakness is the existence of Ghorrd's pre-death family, including his widow, Ghaezda, and his pack of six offspring, some of whom are young adults and some still pups. Ghaezda and the pups are hidden in a suburban compound on Fluere but if they were to be discovered, captured and used as leverage, Ghorrd might willingly allow his source code to be destroyed if assurances were made that his family would be freed and allowed to live.

TRAVERSING THE ICE

Finding Ghorrd's secret base can be difficult or easy, depending on the circumstances. If the Travellers are firmly committed to working with the NPIPD and did not establish a rapport with Angngo, then word has gotten to Ghorrd about it and he makes no effort to reach out to them. He sees them as a tool of the state and a corrupt state it is. However, if the Travellers have become sceptical of the NPIPD and befriended Angngo, possibly even rescued or set her free, then Ghorrd personally invites them to his hideout.

The journey from Takhadz to find Ghorrd varies, depending on mode of travel. The Travellers may rent or purchase solar sailers if desired, or simply hire guides to take them across the ice. They may also take grav vehicles but they will have to purchase them; no agency will rent grav vehicles to people who want to fly over the ice as it is too dangerous. Whichever method they choose, the Referee should roll 2D once per hour during travel across the ice. On a result of 8+, roll 2D again and consult the Ice Encounters table.

If the Travellers are not seen as allies when they are searching for the base, Ghorrd will know they are coming and activates all his defences. If they come as friends, the sentinels that protect the facility let them pass without obstruction.

ICE FOG

The cold airless ice plains of Aarza Kand are sometimes affected by unusual weather on their broad, featureless surfaces. Deep-sea volcanic vents heat the underside of the ice in places, melting it and sending a chemical steam upward through cracks and fissures. The vapours remain close to the surface of the ice, creating a dense fog. The Travellers must be careful to avoid fog banks lest they become lost in one. However, if under pursuit, they can be used to 'ensnare' or confound pursuers.

When a fog bank is encountered, they may either attempt to go through or around it. Going into a fog bank is dangerous but skilled navigators know how to maintain their course. Anyone entering a fog bank may make a Difficult (10+) Navigation check (INT) to maintain their course and get to the other side without hindering their travel time. Effect -1 doubles their travel time for 2D x 10 km. Effect -2 to -5 results in 2D hours lost in the fog bank. Effect -6 or worse means they are lost in the fog bank for D3 days and cannot get out beforehand unless they are aided by an outsider who enters the bank and makes a successful Navigation check.

If the check is made while under pursuit by an enemy vehicle, the Travellers can confound pursuers by making a Difficult (10+) Seafarer (personal) check (INT). A successful check inflicts DM-2 to the opposing vehicle's Navigation check.

Ice Encounters

2D	Encounter
2	Phosphorescent ice patch. Trillions of luminous microscopic life forms amass on the surface of the ice. The Travellers may collect samples but they have no monetary value. The light they give off may be used to guide the Travellers' path.
3–4	Crack in the ice. Solar sailers must make an Average (8+) Seafarer (personal) check (DEX) to avoid the crack or suffer a critical hit.
5–7	Fog bank. See Ice Fog.
8–9	Distress call. A wayward solar sailer or commercial hydrofoil calls for help.
10–12	Bandits! The Travellers icecraft is attacked and pursued. Most bandits are poorly skilled and armed but they are desperate enough to attack. The Travellers likely outmatch them but armed conflict is always dangerous.

If the Travellers go by air/raft, add DM+4 to the check.

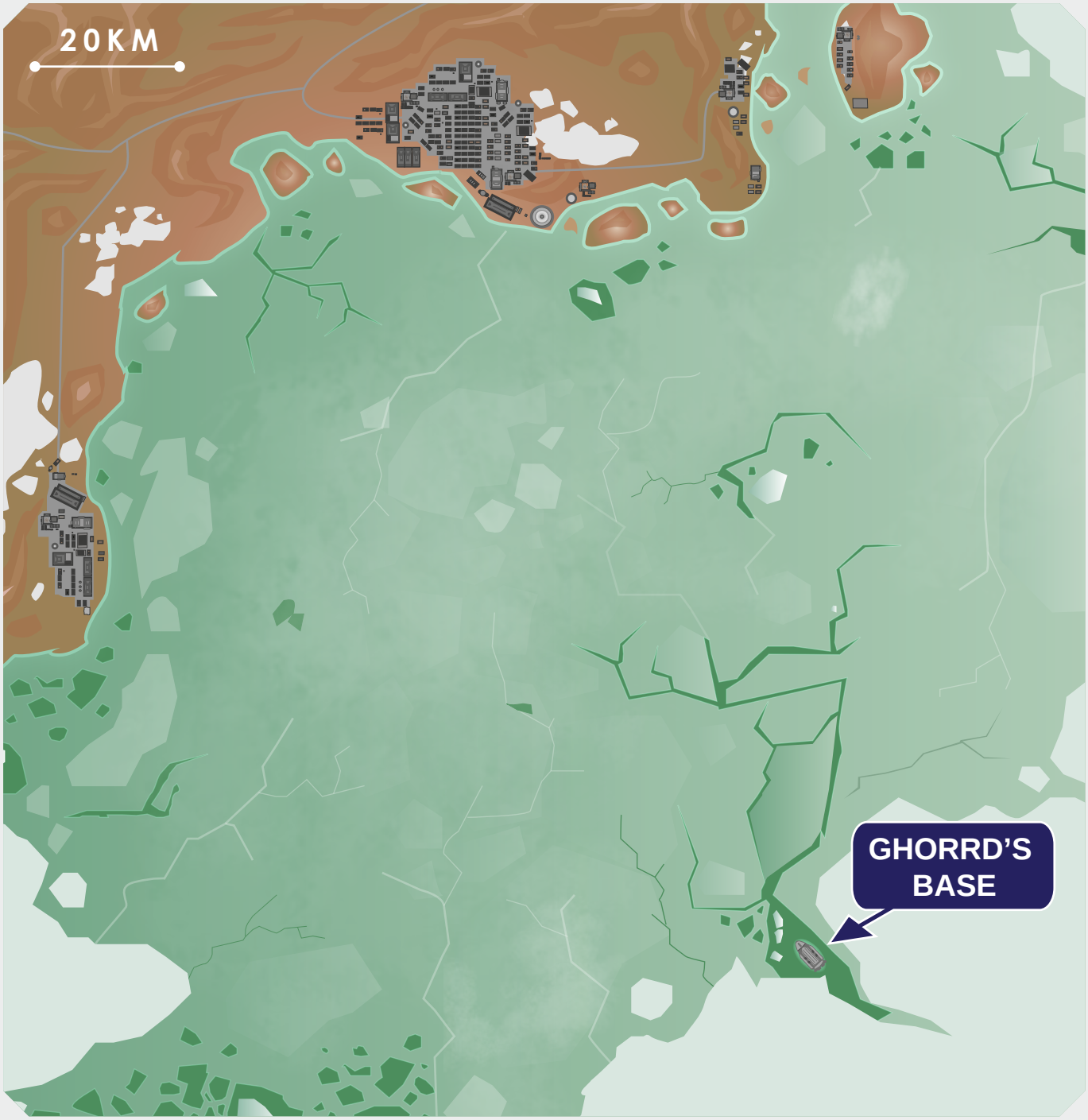
GHORRD'S HUNTER/KILLER ROBOTS

Ghorrd has eight hunter/killer robots on patrol within the halls of the submersible. They are small and well-camouflaged and therefore difficult to hit in combat.

Robot	Size	Hits	Locomotion	Speed	TL	Cost
Hunter/Killer	2	4	Grav	8m	12	Cr56000
Skills	Athletics (dexterity) 2, Gun Combat (all) 1, Recon 2, Stealth 2					
Attacks	Laser Pistol (3D+3, Zero-G)					
Manipulators	1x (STR 1 DEX 7)					
Endurance	36 hours					
Traits	Armour (+4), Flyer (Idle), Heightened Senses, IR/UV Vision, Small (-3), Stealth (+2)					
Programming	Hunter/Killer (Standard), INT 3					
Options	Auditory Sensor (broad spectrum), Camouflage: Visual (improved), Laser Designator, Olfactory Sensor (improved), PRIS Sensor, Recon Sensor (improved), Stealth (improved), Transceiver, 5km (basic), Vacuum Environment Protection, Voder Speaker, Weapon Mount (small), Wireless Data Link					

The base itself is not an emplaced structure at all but a mobile submersible. It is a slow vehicle but is designed to navigate the treacherous ice and cold briny waters deep below the surface. It is equipped with two plasma guns that are used for defence and as ice cutters, melting away swaths of rock-hard ice as it cuts its way through or makes an escape, albeit not a hasty one.

See the map for the current location of the submersible, which is located on the eastern edge of a vast frozen ocean. It is a dangerous place in a precarious location but the structure of the base itself is sturdy and well-defended. Going inside is perilous but if the Travellers can get past its defences, they can achieve whichever goal they have set out to do: make contact with Ghorrd, possibly to establish an alliance with him – or assassinate him, thereby removing the Ekilati Onati from the equation for the foreseeable future.



GHORRD'S SUBMERSIBLE

Ghorrd's mobile base primarily serves as a housing for his consciousness. The effective Tech Level of the submersible is 12 but the computer that houses Ghorrd's mind is significantly more advanced at TL15. Ghorrd has two TL13 clone tanks (refer to the *Robot Handbook*) with which he creates his Ghorrd clones. An adjacent autodoc is present to install augments into the clones.

TL	12
SKILL	Seafarer (submarine)
AGILITY	-1
SPEED (CRUISE)	Very Slow (Idle)
RANGE (CRUISE)	100 years
CREW	2
PASSENGERS	8
CARGO	15.25 tons
HULL	600
SHIPPING	100 tons
COST	MCr74.61

EQUIPMENT

Actuation System, Airlock, Anti-Missile System (gauss), Assault Defence System, Autopilot (advanced), Bunks x6, Camouflage (advanced), Communications Systems (advanced, encrypted, meson communicator, satellite uplink, tightbeam), Computer/3, Control System (advanced), Digger Blade, Electronics Countermeasures (advanced), Fire Extinguishers, Full Galley (10 people), Fusion Plant (advanced), Increased Dive x2, Large Fresher, Manipulator Arm (improved), Navigation System (improved), Sensor Systems (improved, hardened, increased fidelity, underwater sensors), Stealth (improved), Vacuum Environment Protection

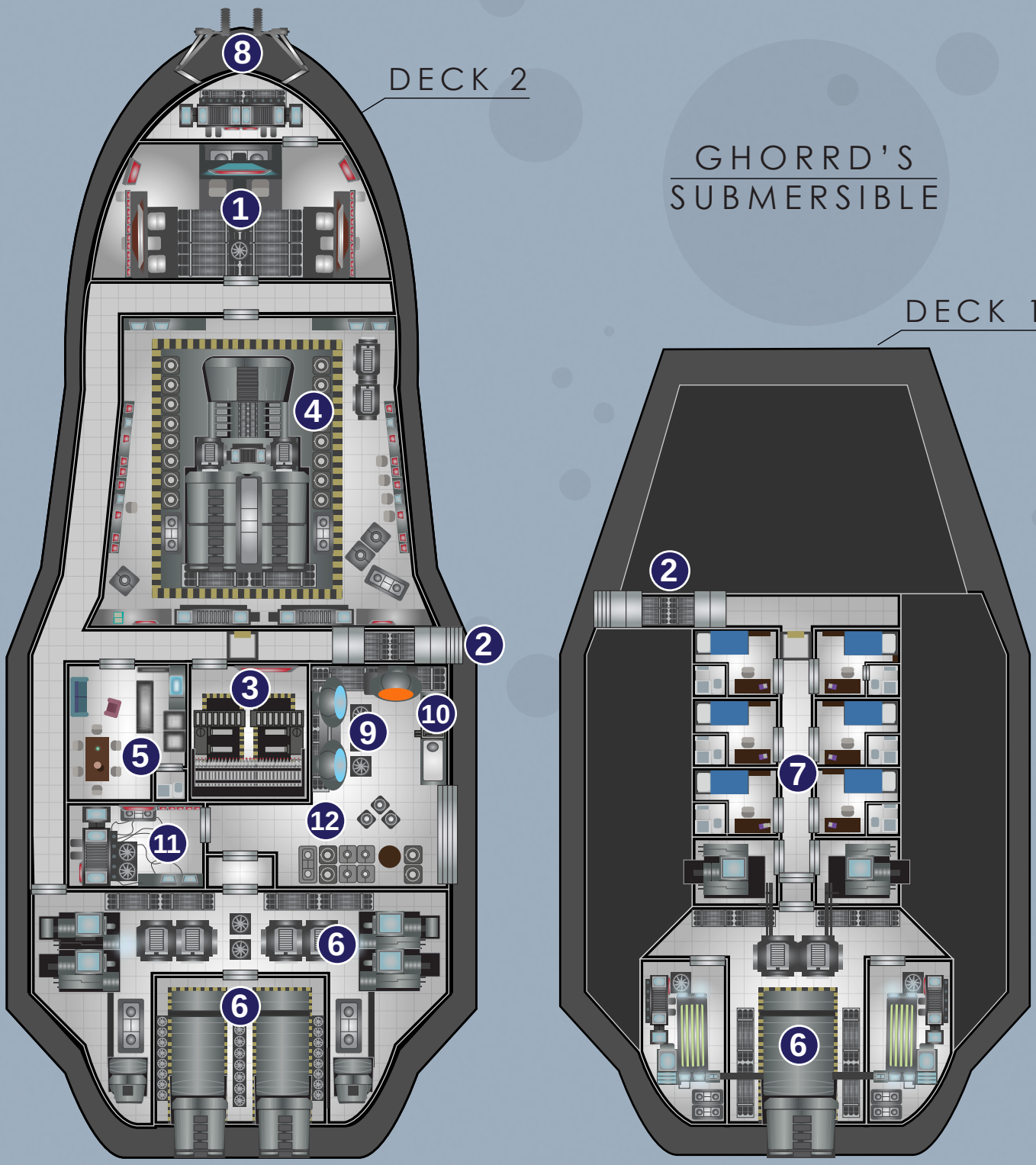
ARMOUR

FRONT	16	REAR	16	SIDES	16

EQUIPMENT	
Autopilot (skill level)	3
Communications (range)	10,000km
Navigation (Navigation DM)	+2
Sensors (Electronics (sensors) DM)	+2
Camouflage (Recon DM)	-4
Stealth (Electronics (sensors) DM)	-2

WEAPON	RANGE	DAMAGE	MAGAZINE	TRAITS	FIRE CONTROL
Torpedo	50	5DD	1 (4)	AP 50, Smart	+4
Twin-Linked Plasma Guns-A	6	2DD+2	—	AP 10	+4

GHORRD'S SUBMERSIBLE



1. Bridge & sensors
2. Airlocks
3. Torpedo bay
4. Plasma Gun-A bay
5. Galley
6. Engineering
7. Bunks
8. Manipulator arms
9. Clone tanks
10. Autodoc
11. 'Ghorrd's Mind'
12. Cargo hold

Finding Ghorrd's base might be a challenge but having crossed the ice, the Travellers will have become accustomed to its geography. The ice sheet is very flat and when skimming along its surface, it seems to go on forever. The danger posed by fog banks is real but with good Drive and Navigation skills, dangers can be mitigated.

If Ghorrd's Ekilati Onati faction is eliminated and Lieutenant Szaken has not discovered all of the details about *The Bargain*, then the adventure might end here. Thanks to the intelligence collected by Angngo, Ghorrd had the basics of a plan to remove Enoula Vistoula as the reigning criminal power in Shinkan, but without him there is no one to go forward with the plan unless the Travellers continue to seek out Enoula for themselves. Szaken will be content that the upstart Ekilati have been eliminated as a threat to the status quo and that things will return to normal. He will remove any impound on the Travellers' ship, giving them full access. Content that he has done his job, Szaken departs the scene, leaving the Travellers to their own devices – of course, he leaves several surveillance drones to keep an eye on them but Szaken ceases to be a factor for the time being.

If the Travellers have allied themselves with Ghorrd and protect him from Szaken's predations, then they have a steadfast ally in the wily (former) Vargr, whom they now know has been reduced to a digital replication. Ghorrd speaks to them with whatever means are available. If one or more of the Travellers has a neural comm or link, he attempts to speak to them directly, manifesting his image in their minds via their auguments. For those who do not, he broadcasts a hologram from one of several display devices in his subterranean base. Ghorrd beseeches them to help finish the job he started. The opportunity lies before them to dismantle the corrupt criminal power structure in Shinkan, shaking subsector politics to their core and restoring the Imperial status quo.

If they are on board, then the next step is a visit to Aadkha Na, where the broken-hearted ex-lover of Shinkan's reigning don resides. If the Travellers consent to participate with Ghorrd's plan, then skip ahead to Airless Senderismo on page 129 to learn more about what they may find there. With the Travellers' consent, he will send one of his personal clones with them, along with a cell of Ekilati Onati enforcers to help them find a very important person of interest.

Regardless of with whom the Travellers decide to work – if indeed they choose anyone at all – the path may end here or it may continue. However, should they choose to depart Shinkan, they still have a certain piece of invaluable art in their possession. At some point, the Don of Shinkan is going to want to make them an offer for it.

BUT WHAT DOES THE BARGAIN WANT?

Clarke's Third Law, 'Any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic', applies to the art world as well. *The Bargain*, as it were, has a mind of its own thanks to the inclusion of artificial intelligence in its design.

Izririili Odituili rendered the piece with a special type of paint that includes nanites in its composition. Over time, the piece changes itself subtly to reflect the programming of its nanites. Changes to date have been so subtle that only a carefully trained eye might notice the differences. The piece has been stored in the *Ventura Fortuna* for quite some time and is not noticeably different from its original form.

The mural has a default setting (its original appearance is shown in the introduction to this Departure on page 101) but its programming was intended to reflect the wishes of the artist. Odituili was an avowed pacifist and hated the violent history of the Imperium. As such, he wanted to protect the sanctity of his signature work by ensuring that, in the wrong hands, it would change into something completely different. For example, should the piece be acquired by a military force, the Imperial Navy perhaps, and be put on display to glorify war, it is designed to warp itself into something else, perhaps emulating a juvenile, unsophisticated style vastly inferior to Odituili's capabilities.

The possibilities are complicated but the Referee should determine that if the piece changes hands and ends up in possession of the wrong party who then use it for the wrong reasons, it will alter its appearance to reflect the displeasure of the long-dead – but curiously still present – original artist.

THE ISHNUUNAR AFFAIR

If the Travellers hope to appeal to Vistume Enoula, they might have to travel to Ishnuunar. The *Ventura Fortuna* cannot make this jump because doing so is outside the boundaries of the Antarean Spur. Therefore, if the Travellers intend to visit the planet, they must either have access to the *Velos tis Alitheia* or take a commercial starship while the *Ventura* remains in port at Aarza Kand. A commercial starship can be anything from a typical free trader, a subsidised merchant or even another subsidised liner similar to the *Ventura Fortuna* (but not as fancy or famous!). Refer to the Common Spacecraft chapter of the *Traveller Core Rulebook* or Starships of the Third Imperium in *High Guard* for traders and liners that the Travellers might use.

At this point in the adventure, the Travellers may have either fully committed to working with the NPIPD or turned on them in favour of the Ekilati Onati. They might also be on the fence, pitting the two against each other while seeking a path that serves their own interests. The Offer is not an adventure that allows the Travellers to play it safe but a savvy group might find a way to manipulate the parties involved, keeping them off balance. If they have not aligned themselves with either faction, then both are either actively seeking to recruit them or gunning for them. The Travellers have an important wildcard in the affairs of Shinkan and neither the NPIPD nor the Ekilati Onati take them lightly.

The key encounter of the Ishnuunar Affair is a meeting with Enoula but events leading up to that may vary. The *Ventura Fortuna*, its crew and the rare art piece in their possession have become the focal point of everyone's machinations. After every two days of game time on Ishnuunar, the Referee should roll once on the appropriate Rumours and Events table below to determine what befalls the Travellers.

Each event can lead to a small adventure. As the Travellers proceed deeper into this Departure, they become complicit in the affairs of the gangs and the NPIPD. If they have not taken a side at this point, their actions begin to determine what happens next. Roll 1D and consult the appropriate column of the Rumours and Events table to determine a random event.

Rumours and Events

1D	Aligned with NPIPD	Aligned with Ekilati Onati	Neutral, non-aligned
1	A renegade Ekilati Onati cell, led by a Ghorrd clone, has been discovered. Lieutenant Szaken wants the Travellers to find and destroy it.	The NPIPD has sent a squad of SHOCk cops from orbit to find the Travellers. They are using a commercial shuttle.	Lieutenant Szaken attempts to recruit the Travellers with threats, bribes or a mutually beneficial alliance.
2	An Ekilati Onati cell has identified the Travellers and pursues them – or – the Travellers spot the cell and may turn the tables on them.	An Ekilati Onati cell recruits the Travellers to commandeer a defensive missile turret at the starport to shoot down the SHOCk cops shuttle.	Dilumna Villa, an agent of Achenaar-Antilles, recruits the Travellers to investigate Enoula to see if she would entertain an alliance. See Wildcard on page 115.
3	Szaken asks the Travellers to set up a sting operation against the Ekilati Onati or the mercantile guilds.	Ghorrd asks the Travellers to infiltrate the NPIPD and gain useful intel from them.	Both the NPIPD and Ekilati Onati recruit the Travellers, giving them the chance to be double agents, if desired.
4	Szaken asks the Travellers to assassinate Ghorrd or another high-level Ekilati Onati functionary.	Ghorrd asks the Travellers to poison Lieutenant Szaken.	More trouble than they are worth: Assassins are sent by both Szaken and Ghorrd to kill the Travellers.
5	The NPIPD deputises the Travellers, giving them full access to SHOCk cops gear.	The Ekilati offer membership to the Travellers: a rarity for non-Vargr.	The Travellers receive rival appeals from the Ekilati Onati and NPIPD.
6	Select and combine two events.		

The events serve dual purposes. First, they add colour and chaos to the Travellers' time on Ishnuunar. Second, they draw the attention of the Ishnuunar Mercantile Guilds and the don of the Shinkan crime organisations. The key event of this adventure is an eventual encounter with her. Initially, the Travellers are beneath her notice but their involvement in the skulduggery of the events eventually draws her attention. After they have resolved at least two of the events, she sends one of her capos to retrieve them.

The Travellers might be attempting to find her as well but Enoula is elusive. A successful organised crime boss would have been killed by a rival if she were easy to find. A successful Difficult (10+) Streetwise check (1D days, SOC) reveals her approximate location in the capital city of Lamaza but they cannot pinpoint exactly where she is without a more comprehensive surveillance effort. Some combination of skills such as Recon, Investigate, Persuade and Deception might be required, and the Referee may allow the Travellers to devise an appropriate task chain to find her. However, once they do, they are likely to incur the notice of her security detail, which uses imported tech to divert surveillance and tracking. They will be prevented from directly approaching and conversing with Enoula but depending on the circumstances, they can obtain an audience with her.

Enoula is at odds with both the NPIPD, whom she resents for their 'unnecessary' interference in her affairs, and the Ekilati Onati, whom she sees as inconsequential upstarts. She knows that the NPIPD helps to prop up her organisation but the fact they are doing it annoys her. It gives her rivals the notion that she needs help to maintain her position atop the other gangs. On the other hand, there is not much she can do about it. One cannot kill police officers without bringing more heat down on your head. Annoying as they can be, the police – even corrupt ones like Lieutenant Szaken – must be tolerated. She respects Ghorrd but ultimately sees him as easily beaten since he does not even have the full support of his own organisation.

The encounter with Enoula can be amenable, hostile or neutral. If the Travellers have allied themselves with the NPIPD, then the encounter is amenable and they will be invited to meet with her in her luxury offices in the industrial-looking Lamaza Tower. However, if they align themselves with the Ekilati Onati, the encounter will be hostile. They can still meet Enoula but it will require an infiltration of the tower. A neutral encounter may occur if the Travellers have not aligned themselves with either faction. In this case, they may reach out to Enoula using various social skills – Carouse, Persuade or Diplomat, perhaps. If they make a convincing case, Enoula will grant them an audience but they must have something to offer. She is a businesswoman and does not have time for social chit-chat.

Enoula has recently learned that they are in possession of *The Bargain* and would very much like to make a deal for it. In fact, she insists on a deal. She does not reveal her reasons but the Travellers may have learned about her relationship with Lady Victrix from Angngo, Ghorrd or Mari Ygbo.

Obtaining *The Bargain* is only part of the deal. Enoula also wants the Travellers to find Lady Victrix, her lost lover. She has successfully hidden herself away but Enoula believes she is nearby, perhaps within a few parsecs. To close the deal, she needs the art piece as a gift, and Victrix' presence to receive it.

ISHNUUNAR MERCANTILE GUILDS SECURITY GOONS

		SKILLS
STR	11	AOC (gangsters) 3
DEX	9	
END	10	
EQUIPMENT		Gauss Pistol (3D+3), Stunstick (2D), Blade (2D), Cloth Trench Coat (+6) or Protec Suit (+4), Commdot

The security goons are the tough, brutal enforcers of the Ishnuunar crime organisation. They are loyal to their don and will do whatever it takes to defend her, including laying down their own lives. Enoula has the best soldiers available and her goons are lethal combatants. A security goon squad is a group of four, including one capo who has two skills at one level higher than their AOC.

STAR-CROSSED LOVERS

Enoula is a Threep, a trilaterally symmetrical species with three legs, three arms, three-fingered hands and three faces on a centrally located head. The Threep evolved on Onsekuu, a world with a dense atmosphere. They are accustomed to superior sound conductivity and therefore tend to speak loudly on worlds with a less-dense atmosphere. Threep have six sexes and require the communal presence of all six to mate successfully.

Threep are accustomed to forming sexual and familial bonds, and those separated from their kind often form bonds with other species. They are driven not only by sexual needs but a deep desire for community and companionship.

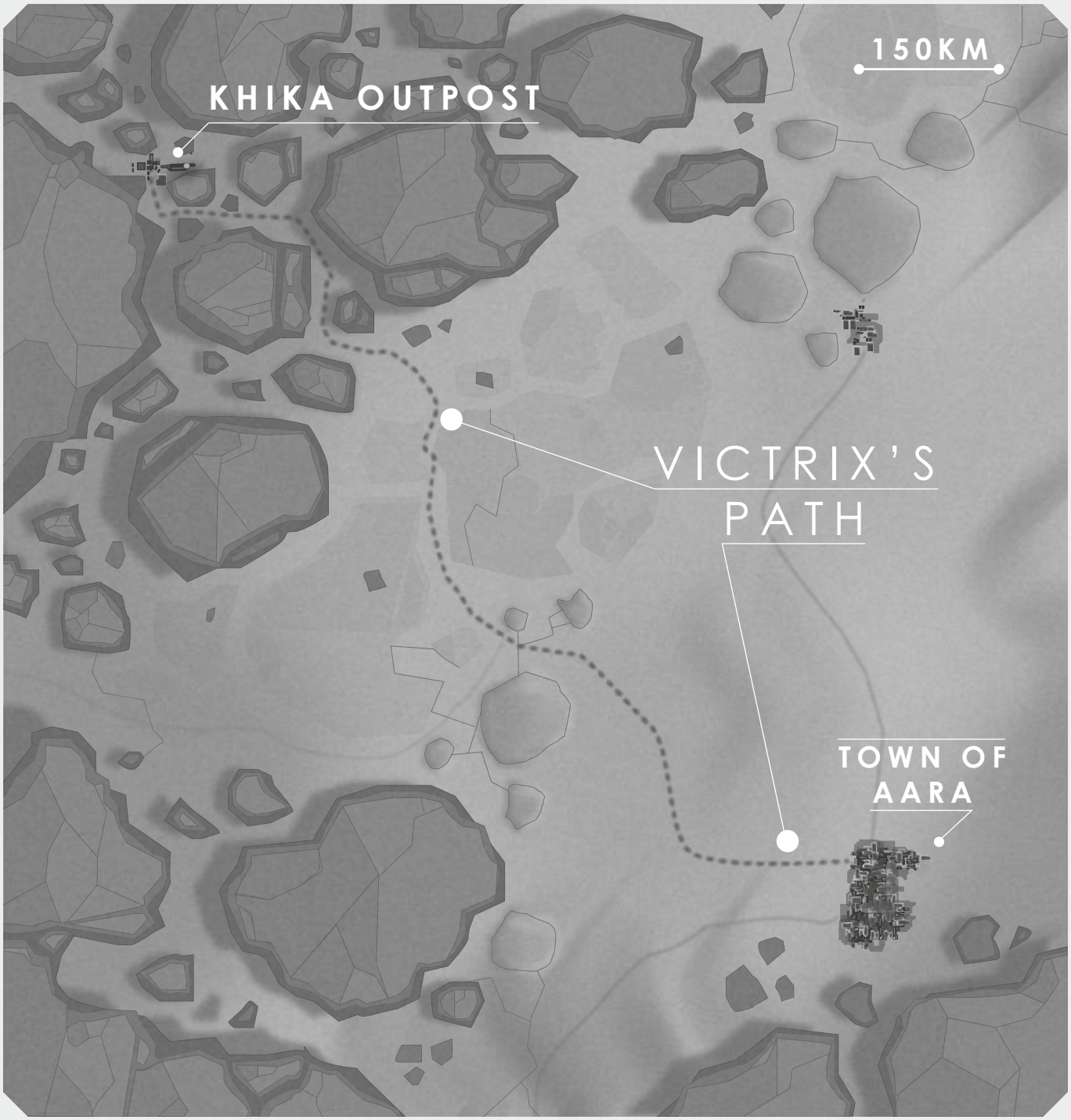
AIRLESS SENDERISMO

After ending her relationship with Enoula, Lady Victrix left for Aadkha Na (Core 3104, E200776-8), where she took up residence as an independent attorney. She spends most of her time alone now, wishing her relationship had not taken the terrible turn that it did but also not regretting her decision. She had come to abhor the violence exacted by her gangster lover and decided to part ways in order to distance herself as much as possible from the life they shared.

Aadkha Na is the type of place where one can disappear. It is low-tech, has a poor starport and there are millions of people there, living in crowded cities with second-rate comms systems. It is in a crowded star cluster but most interstellar traffic avoids it, preferring to patronise more prosperous and cosmopolitan neighbours. Victrix likes to go for long wilderness treks on the plains of Aadkha Na but these are not just *any* treks. Victrix dons a vacc suit and lugs an enormous backpack carrying, among other things, a pressurised tent and extractor, a device that takes elements from the soil, ice or other materials to produce breathable air, which is used to replenish her life support supply.

A vacuum trek is limited by the success of the extractor at acquiring resources. Skilled vacuum trekkers gauge the distance of their desired path and ensure they have the resources to make the trek without requiring a resupply or rescue. Should things go wrong, they are only a radio call away from requesting an evacuation but doing this is anathema to skilled trekkers. Most would rather risk death than call for help.

If the Travellers go to Aadkha Na with the intention of seeking Victrix out, they will have to find her on the plains. Like most vacuum trekkers, Victrix turns off all devices that emit radio waves or microwaves, so she is difficult to find. A ship with quality sensors should be able to pick out the veritable needle in the haystack unless she has holed up in a cave, making a ground search necessary.



If the Travellers have to go to ground in vacc suits to find her, allow them to make a combination of Navigation, Recon and Survival checks to obtain Victrix's trail and track her to her current location. The Referee should also have them make Vacc Suit checks from time-to-time, especially if they attempt jumps or other stunts in the light gravity of the planet.

Victrix will not be especially excited to be found and will draw her laser pistol to defend herself from the intruders. With her radio turned off, the situation runs the risk of becoming lethal. She will not know who they are when they approach her and given her past life, she always harbours the concern that an old enemy might come looking for her. If the Travellers avoid violence, they will have to use some form of hand signalling to denote that they come in peace… if indeed that is their intention. Depending on their motives, they might have come to kidnap Victrix to use her as leverage against Enouli, who would pay just about any price to protect her one true love.

If the Travellers manage to pacify Victrix and establish communications with her, she will invite one or more of them into her pressure tent to have a civilised discussion without the aid of radio, which she seems resistant to use extensively. Only one or two Travellers can fit and her invitation comes with the caveat that they plug their life support units into a tent dongle in order to pump in whatever amount of oxygen they use for the duration of the conversation. Air is a precious resource when on a senderismo and she cannot spare any for her guests.

Victrix is concerned that the Travellers are enemies of Enoula, someone whom she still cares for very much. If they indicate that they intend to threaten or harm Enoula, Victrix will oust them from her tent, seemingly oblivious to the threat that they can pose to her in this dangerous vacuum environment. However, if they indicate that their intentions are peaceful, or at least diplomatic, then Victrix is more than willing to talk to them.

If the conversation takes them into a discussion of Enoula's criminal activities, she is careful not to implicate Enoula for any alleged crimes, preferring instead to describe them as 'business activities'. As an attorney, she is adept at the careful use of language. Over the course of the conversation, the Travellers may discover that Victrix wants Enoula to legitimise her operations, again without implicating her lover, but clearly expressing doubts about Enoula's occupation.

NIZ AND NAM, PRETENDERS TO THE THRONE

Nizarrith Kalkouta and Namalesa Aam are the respective syndicate leaders of Derku and Gekhuu, two of the most powerful industrial worlds in the subsector and certainly the most influential. Ironically, infighting between the two and lack of a sounder organisational strategy prevents either of these dystopias from establishing hegemony over Shinkan. Niz and Nam, as they are not-so-affectionately known, grouse and grumble about how things would be different if they ruled the roost, but that responsibility falls to Vistume Enoula on Ishnuunar, a vastly more blighted and desperate dystopia but one that hosts the powerful merchant guilds of Shinkan.

Niz and Nam are brutal gangsters, effective at conducting a decades-long war of attrition with each other – and Enoula for that matter – but when it comes to vision, they are sorely lacking. However, recent events have given them an opportunity to make a grab for power. Enoula's crisis of confidence, driven by her love for Victrix, has been a distraction. There are goods to smuggle, drugs to peddle and traders to intimidate and extort. Enoula's recession from her responsibilities has left a void of power that has not gone unnoticed, one that Niz and Nam will soon fill if given half a chance.

This is not the outcome that Lieutenant Szaken and his powerful benefactors want but it is one they will accept and attempt to manipulate to their liking if it is thrust upon them. Szaken and his superiors have little confidence that the syndicates could run things as efficiently as the mercantile guilds but if left with no other choice, they would strive to make it work.

GANG WAR

Niz and Nam do not idly sit by while our star-crossed lovers try to alter the composition of the Shinkan organised crime network. Both of their syndicates have spies on Ishnuunar and Aarza Kand who keep them informed. They can 'smell' the weakness of their opposition as if it were rotten fish. However, it takes time for orders to travel at the speed of jump. Niz's and Nam's couriers have jump-2 capability, so messages from Ishnuunar take one week to get to either Derku or Gekhuu, two from Aarza Kand, and any action taken on those worlds requires double that time to accommodate a response. For this reason, both Niz and Nam give their surveillance teams a fair amount of autonomy.

Neither Niz nor Nam send their best enforcers on away missions, no matter how important the surveillance job is. Operations and security on the Syndicate Worlds are too important to risk their best operatives. Ideally, Niz and Nam would like to draw either or both of Enoula and Ghorrd away from their strongholds before taking action against them but their agents might jump the gun, attacking either of the two opposing gang lords if given the chance.

The opportunity to kill Enoula happens if and when she finds out that Victrix is hiding away on Aadkha Na and she exposes herself by going to see her. However, she only goes to Aadkha Na if she can first secure *The Bargain* from the *Ventura Fortuna*. If the Travellers convince Captain Eilerfaust to part with it, Enoula sends a team of contractors to ever-so-carefully retrieve the mural-bearing frieze from the ship. Enoula will offer MCr10 for it initially but will negotiate up to MCr25. Its market value is somewhere between MCr20–35.

If the Travellers and their captain refuse to sell it, Enoula stages a heist. If Enoula fails to obtain the art, she never exposes herself to an assassination attempt by the syndicates. If she does get the piece, then she takes it directly to Victrix, wherever she may be found on the surface of Aadkha Na with *The Bargain* in tow, safely ensconced in a vacuum-proof case. Enoula will be under surveillance by syndicate hit teams and will come under attack when she is most vulnerable, probably in a vacc suit on the dusty plains of the icy vacuum world. In addition to the syndicates, the Ekilati Onati – if Ghorrd's secret base on Aarza Kand was not destroyed, ending Ghorrd's 'life' – will also attempt to kill Enoula once she is away from the safe confines of her homeworld.

Enoula will have members of her security team with her but being out in the open on a vacuum plain makes her vulnerable. She could be killed. The Referee can determine the course of events, or the Travellers might get involved to sway things in the direction they want. Ghorrd does not have any particular bloodlust for Enoula Vistume. He merely wants her out of the way so he can level the playing field and enhance the standing of the Ekilati Onati. He will deploy one or more of his instances to kill Enoula if the opportunity arises but if he finds out that she intends to retire, he will call them off.

Even if Ghorrd's source intellect was destroyed, several remaining clone 'instances' might be available to carry out his will. However, these are the final avatars of his personality and should they be destroyed, the Ekilati Onati effort is lost. The chances to kill Ghorrd are many. He has about 20 active clones in the subsector, each carrying out a different mission. The Niz and Nam away teams are not smart enough to figure out that they are dealing with a collection of clones until they have killed three or four instances of Ghorrd, not an easy thing to do when each is gifted with Ghorrd's cunning. Making a move of this magnitude is effectively a declaration of war and the Ekilati Onati will attempt to destroy every syndicate den they can if even one of their clones come under direct attack. If a Ghorrd instance is killed, they will up the ante, taking the war to Derku or Gekhuu, sending a team of assassins to kill a major syndicate figure.

A full gang war between the three factions is possible. Should it get out of hand, Lieutenant Szaken might summon the Imperial Navy to quell the violence. None of the gangs wants to see an Imperial Marine police action on their worlds, so will try to keep their conflict as clandestine as possible.

THE HEIST

If the Travellers refuse to sell *The Bargain* to Enoula, she intends to have it anyway. She attempts to plan a heist, first by planting an operative aboard the *Ventura Fortuna* – disguised as a passenger, of course – whose job it is to reconnoitre the ship, breach its security and allow a team of armed robbers aboard to extract the art piece and fend off anyone who attempts to stop them.

If the Travellers are wise to the plan and prevent the new 'passenger' from coming aboard, Enoula coerces Mari Ygbo to do the job since she was already aboard the ship. Art heists are not Ygbo's typical fare, so the job might be done somewhat clumsily but she certainly communicates her commitment to obtaining the piece.

The events of the gang war need not involve the Travellers but the Referee may opt to include one or more scenes of violence to show that things are heating up. However, should the Travellers want to influence events, they can certainly get involved.

THE TAKEDOWN

If they have not managed to assassinate her already, Enoula's enemies make an attempt when she is aboard the *Ventura Fortuna*, either to see *The Bargain*, to make a deal to purchase it, or – if the Travellers refuse to sell it – when she and her team are attempting to steal it.

The attack can occur in orbit of Ishnuunar or at Aadkha Na, where Enoula intends to offer her gift to her lost lover, Victrix, who currently resides on the planet. The hit team on the takedown cutter consists of five soldiers (basically mob enforcers) and one lead assassin, known simply as 'The Finisher'.

The cutter initiates its attack shortly after Enoula and her entourage embark the liner. The Travellers may assist Enoula's bodyguards, or simply stand by to see what happens. The hit team has no desire to massacre everyone aboard the *Ventura Fortuna* but if anyone gets in the way, they have no qualms about killing innocent bystanders.

TAKEDOWN CUTTER

The takedown cutter is a custom small craft designed to stealthily approach, establish forced linkage with, and board another ship, either using its airlock or breaking through the hull with its breaching tube. The Derku and Gekhuu syndicates have several such craft with varying specifications This one happens to be available when the gangs see their opportunity to eliminate Enoula.

TL12		Tons	Cost (MCr)
Hull	50 tons, Streamlined	—	3
	Stealth (improved)	—	5
Armour	Crystaliron, Armour: 12	18	3.6
M-Drive	Thrust 4	2	4
Power Plant	Fusion (TL12), Power 36	2.4	2.4
Fuel Tanks	4 weeks of operation	2	—
Bridge	Holographic Controls	3	0.625
Computer	Computer/10	—	0.16
Sensors	Military Grade	2	4.1
Weapons	Single Turret (laser drill)	1	0.35
Systems	Fuel Scoops	—	—
	Breaching Tube	3	3
	Armouries x2	2	0.5
	Forced Linkage Apparatus (enhanced)	2	0.1
Staterooms	Acceleration Seats x12	6	0.36
Software	Manoeuvre	—	—
	Intellect	—	—
	Library	—	—
	Evade/1	—	1
Cargo		6	—

Crew

Pilot, Gunner, Marines x10

Hull: 20

Running Costs

MAINTENANCE COST

Cr2373/month

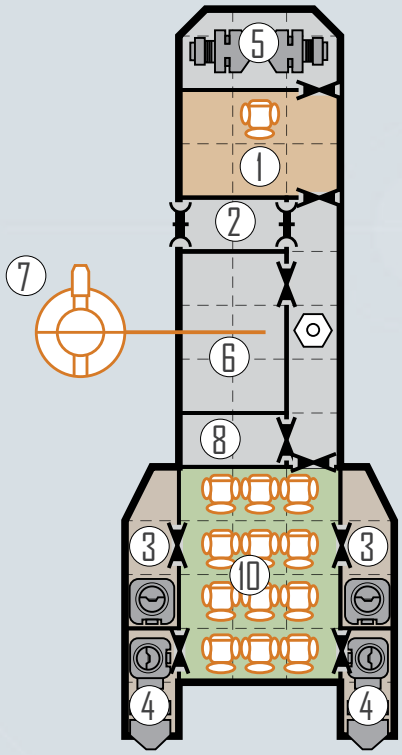
PURCHASE COST

MCr28.477

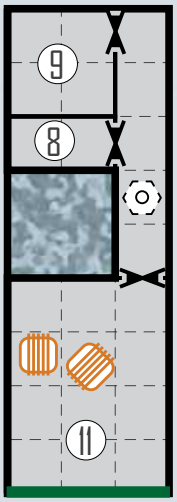
Power Requirements

Basic Ship Systems	10
Manoeuvre Drive	20
Sensors	2
Weapons	4

TAKEDOWN CUTTER



DECK 2



DECK 1

LEGEND

1. Bridge
2. Airlock
3. Power plant
4. M-drive
5. Sensors
6. Breaching tube
7. Single turret
8. Armouries
9. Forced linkage apparatus
10. Acceleration seats
11. Cargo

1 square = 0.5 Ton

THE FINISHER

		SKILLS
STR	12	AOC (assassin) 3
DEX	12	
END	10	
EQUIPMENT		Heavy Revolver (4D-3, Bulky), Gauss Submachinegun (3D+2, AP 3, Auto 4), Dagger (1D+2), Poly Carapace (+12), Commdot

The syndicate assassins are not top-of-the-line foot soldiers in their respective organisations but are well-equipped and not to be trifled with. Being on an away mission is neither glamourous nor desirable for these enforcers, so they are likely to be foolhardy and fight on even when the odds turn against them. They want to make an impression on their bosses so they can get plush assignments back on their homeworlds of Derku and Gekhuu.

SHIFTING TIDES

The conclusion of The Offer is variable. If Enoula obtains *The Bargain*, and presents it to Victrix, her long lost love accepts the gift but only if Enoula commits to changing her ways, either by legitimising all of her businesses or abandoning her criminal enterprises altogether. Either way, the end result is a reset of Shinkan's organised crime hierarchy, leaving an immense power void. This is the result that was desired by Ghorrd and the Ekilati Onati but only time will tell whether they are able to take advantage of the situation or not.

SYNDICATE ASSASSINS

		SKILLS
STR	10	AOC (assassin) 1, AOC (thug) 0
DEX	8	
END	9	
EQUIPMENT		Heavy Revolver (4D-3, Bulky), Gauss Submachinegun (3D+2, AP 3, Auto 4), Dagger (1D+2), Cloth (+8), Commdot

Lieutenant Szaken will be displeased if Enoula steps down but if it happens, he immediately begins to develop a plan in which one of the syndicates fills the void and the status quo remains more or less in place. Neither Niz and Nam are effective leaders and over time the criminal power structure of Shinkan might very well collapse under their leadership. The NPIPD's best bet might be to help Ghorrd – if he still lives – cement his position as the top crime boss in the subsector but that path is fraught with danger as well. Ghorrd has neither the numbers nor the network to support such a promotion; hence his desire for a hard reset. Ghorrd simply wants the other players hamstrung or removed from the table altogether. He needs time to build his power base, first by eliminating his competition within the Ekilati Onati and then by filling the void left by the mercantile guilds and syndicates with his own operatives.

The situation is highly fluid and there is no guarantee that anyone will get what they were hoping for but one thing is for certain: a single piece of art, *The Bargain*, has changed the landscape of Shinkan. Things will never be the same after it has been gifted from one lost love to another. In the process, the Travellers discover that the Imperium, for all its vaunted power and prestige, operates in many different ways and not always as expected.

CENTRAL SUPPLY CATALOGUE

The following new equipment is presented in this Departure.

AUGMENTS

The Ekilati Onati use several new augments to help them fight better, evade capture, endure pain and, if the situation warrants it, to self-destruct in order to avoid capture.

Internal Null Field: An internal sheath beneath the epidermis and lodged into the dermis, an internal null field is one of the more painful augments to install, requiring a longer recovery time than similar augments, such as subdermal armour. The field is powered by the user's circulatory and respiratory systems and makes them extremely difficult to detect by most sensory organs and electronic sensors. While sensory detection is always blocked, the Stealth enhancement requires the user to toggle a mental 'switch'.

Pain Inhibitors: Pain inhibitors enable the user to shrug off excessive pain. They serve the dual purposes of making their user more effective (but ultimately no less vulnerable) in battle and to enable them to resist painful interrogation and torture techniques.

Internal Plasma Cell: This dangerous augment is installed temporarily for the dual purpose of providing additional energy or self-destructing the user in a fiery ball of plasma fire to avoid capture. It changes Fatigue effects as follows:

- Traveller becomes Fatigued after staying awake for END x2 + 18 hours.
- Traveller becomes Fatigued after performing heavy labour for END x2 hours.
- Traveller becomes Fatigued after making a number of consecutive melee attacks greater than END x2 in a single combat.

Augment	TL	Effect	Cost
Internal Null Field	13	Stealth +3, undetectable by sensors	Cr250000

Augment	TL	Effect	Cost
Pain Inhibitors	12	Enables user to stay conscious after losing second characteristic during combat; however, death still occurs after losing the third. DM+4 in opposed checks during interrogations.	Cr125000

Augment	TL	Effect	Cost
Internal Plasma Cell	13	Doubles resistance to Fatigue. Mental switch activates self-destruct within 1D rounds, disintegrating the user in a ball of plasma fire.	Cr100000

ALLIES AND OPPOSITION

LIEUTENANT GAUDERI SZAKEN

SPECIES	GENDER	AGE
Human	Male	40

TRAITS			—	SKILLS
STR	7 (8)	INT	11	Deception 2, Drive 0, Flyer (grav) 1, Gun Combat (energy) 1, Gun Combat (slug) 1, Investigate 3, Melee (unarmed) 1, Persuade 2, Recon 2, Streetwise 3
DEX	9 (10)	EDU	10	
END	8	SOC	8	

WEAPONS	Gauss Pistol (3D, AP 3, Auto 2), Billy Club (2D), Stunner (3D, Stun, Zero-G)
ARMOUR	Protec Suit (+4)
AUGMENTS	Floating Eye (detachable), Metastatic Platelet Injection (doubles natural healing rate), Muscular Bridging, Neural Jack (TL13), Subdermal Armour (+5), Transmitter (planetary), Weapon Implant (laser pistol in left arm)
EQUIPMENT	Commdot, Portable Computer/4 (Agent/2, Decryptor/2, Intrusion/3)

Lieutenant Szaken is one of the rising stars of the NPIPD, a savvy and cunning inspector, but like most of his brethren, he is corrupt. Szaken has taken more bribes than he can count and spends more time building his own personal police fiefdom than solving crimes. His bosses would very much like to see the status quo maintained and Szaken is there to see that it is. He knows his place in the hierarchy of Shinkan and takes care of his superiors' interests, all the while paying lip service to maintaining peace and upholding law and order.

Szaken is an avid transhuman with multiple augments. Most include the Invisitech feature, so they are not outwardly noticeable. However, his transmitter features a pair of antennae that – when deployed – are quite prominent, just as Szaken intends. These make him look a bit like a predatory insect, a praying mantis that is about to pounce on its unwitting prey.

FLOATING EYE

Szaken has a detachable advanced cybernetic eye, capable of independent grav flight and controllable at up to 500 kilometres of distance.

Augment	Hits	Locomotion	Speed	TL	Cost
Floating Eye	1	Grav	6m	14	Cr250000
Skills	—				
Attacks	—				
Manipulators	—				
Endurance	Indefinite, 36 hours independent				
Traits	Flyer (idle), IR/UV Vision, Small (-4)				
Programming	None				
Options	Advanced Eye (PRIS), Detachable, Grav-propelled, Invisitech, Natural Looking (TL14), Remotely-operated, Ruggedised, Self-repairing, Transceiver 50km, Visual Interface, Wireless Data Link				

MIPUS

Lieutenant Szaken has a fleet of 20 police robots at his disposal, referred to as Mobile Interzonal Police Units (MIPUs). MIPUs are good for pursuit, armed confrontation and low-level investigatory work. They have slightly distinct personalities and unique serial numbers, painted on their chassis, to help identify and differentiate them. MIPUs are known for overzealous use of their Investigate skill to provide unbidden assists on cases. What they lack in skill they make up for with persistence.

Robot	Size	Hits	Locomotion	Speed	TL	Cost
MIPU	3	8	Grav	10m (Fast)	12	Cr78000
Skills	Athletics (dexterity) 2, Athletics (endurance) 1, Flyer (grav) 3, Gun Combat (energy) 2, Investigate 1					
Attacks	Laser Pistol (3D+3, Zero-G)					
Manipulators	1x (STR 5 DEX 7)					
Endurance	58 (7) hours					
Traits	Armour (+4), Flyer (Fast), Heightened Senses, IR/UV Vision, Small (-2)					
Programming	Advanced, INT 8					
Options	Auditory Sensor (broad spectrum), Encryption Module, PRIS Sensor, Transceiver 50km (enhanced), Vacuum Environment Protection, Video Screen (advanced), Voder Speaker, Weapon Mount (small), Wireless Data Link					

ANGNGO

TRAITS			—	SKILLS
STR	6 (3)	INT	9	Athletics 2 (dexterity), Deception 2, Flyer 0, Gun Combat (slug) 1, Investigate 3, Melee (infighting) 2, Persuade 1, Recon 0, Stealth 2, Streetwise 2
DEX	12 (4)	EDU	8	
END	8 (1)	SOC	7	
AUGMENTS			Internal Null Field, Pain Inhibitors	

Angngo was a favoured spy for the Ekilati Onati, renowned amongst her pack for her ability to complete difficult missions. She might finally be at the end of her rope on this mission, however. She is convinced that the NPIPD intends to either kill her or hand her over to someone who will.

The parenthetical numbers for Angngo's physical characteristics indicate their state after undergoing torture.

VAERZZA GHORRDZAERSKOURZ (STANDARD CLONE)

SPECIES	GENDER	AGE
—	Male	42

TRAITS			—	SKILLS
STR	10	INT	12	Athletics 1 (dexterity), Drive (grav) 2, Gun Combat (slug) 2, Language (Galanglic) 3, Leadership 3, Melee (infighting) 3, Persuade 2, Recon 2, Stealth 1, Streetwise 3, Vacc Suit 1
DEX	9	EDU	8	
END	8	SOC	14	
WEAPONS			Gauss Pistol (3D, AP 3, Auto 2), Claw Fist (4D), Garrotte (2D; 1D subsequent rounds)	
ARMOUR			Warrior Armour Set (Zurrku-Oengga) (+7, +6 for shield) modified with Blade Enhancements (2D during Infighting)	
AUGMENTS			Wafer Jack (TL13)	
EQUIPMENT			Commdot	

This version of the Ghorrd clone only has the wafer jack augment and wears light armour. Ghorrd manufactures as many of these as he needs to maintain his 'presence' in Shinkan.

VAERZZA GHORRDZAERSKOURZ (ENHANCED CLONE)

TRAITS			—	SKILLS
STR	10 (13)	INT	12	Athletics 1 (dexterity), Drive (grav) 2, Gun Combat (slug) 2, Language (Galanglic) 3, Leadership 3, Melee (infighting) 3, Persuade 2, Recon 2, Stealth 1, Streetwise 3, Vacc Suit 2
DEX	9 (12)	EDU	8	
END	8	SOC	14	

WEAPONS	Stagger Laser Rifle (5D, Auto 2, Zero-G), Gauss Pistol (3D, AP 3, Auto 2)
ARMOUR	Vargr Battledress (+23)
AUGMENTS	Subdermal Armour (+3), Internal Null Field, Tail Enhancement (1D, no dodge or parry first round attack), Wafer Jack (TL13)
EQUIPMENT	Commdot

Ghorrdzaerskourz, a.k.a. 'Ghorrd', is a leading figure in the Ekilati Onati. He is also known as the 'Shadow Wolf' for his inexplicable ability to slip free when it appears he has been caught. Little do his enemies know that the original Ghorrd was killed in an assassination attempt and that each subsequent instance of Ghorrd is actually a clone of the original. Only his closest, most trusted confidantes are aware of the deception and have sworn to take it to their graves.

VISTUME ENOULA

SPECIES	GENDER	AGE
Threep	Female	54

TRAITS			—	SKILLS
STR	5	INT	12	Deception 3, Recon 1, Gun Combat (slug) 2, Melee (blade) 2, Persuade 3, Stealth 1, Streetwise 3
DEX	7	EDU	7	
END	6	SOC	10	

Enoula is an efficient and ruthless gangster who has used all the traditional tools at her disposal to lead the Ishnuunar Mercantile Guilds. She is credited with building up their 'army', appointing trusted capos to lead its soldiers. Enoula uses no augments, wears no armour and carries no weapons, depending on a squad of loyal bodyguards to protect her at all times.

FAVOUR

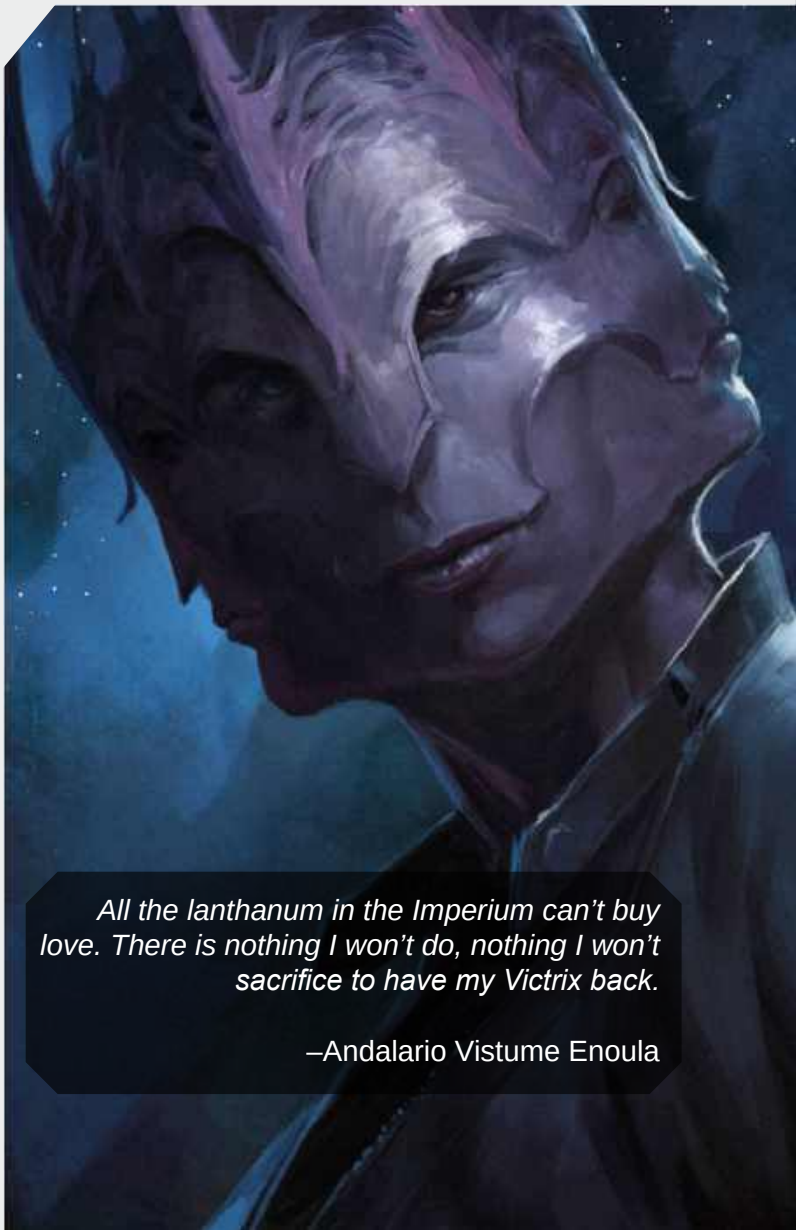
At the conclusion of this Departure, the Travellers may have earned some valuable Favour DMs. Each provides a DM+2 Favour that may be used as described in Gaining Favour on page 47 of the *Singularity Sourcebook*. The Outcomes table outlines possible Favour awards.

Outcomes

Outcome	Award
The Travellers help Lieutenant Szaken keep the Ishnuunar Mercantile Guilds in power.	2 Underworld 1 Political
The Travellers successfully help the Ekilati Onati subvert the Ishnuunar Mercantile Guilds.	2 Underworld
The Derku and Gekhuu Syndicates ascend to leadership in the subsector	—

VICTRIX

TRAITS			—	SKILLS
STR	6	INT	11	Athletics 1 (dexterity), Diplomat 2, Gun Combat 0, Navigation 3, Persuade 1, Profession (project management) 2, Recon 1, Science (planetology), Survival 2, Vacc Suit 3
DEX	8	EDU	11	
END	9	SOC	9	
WEAPONS	Laser Pistol (3D+3, Zero-G)			
ARMOUR	Vacc Suit, Advanced (+10)			
EQUIPMENT	Transceiver (continental), Pressure Tent, Extractor, Climbing Gear, Survival Still			



All the lanthanum in the Imperium can't buy love. There is nothing I won't do, nothing I won't sacrifice to have my Victrix back.

–Andalario Vistume Enoula

You can call me corrupt, on the take, a puppetmaster. I don't care. I'm still a cop, and I still have a job to do. They say Shinkan is a crime-infested hellhole, but I don't see it. What do the syndicates do that's all that different from the Imperium? They run the show and collect tribute. Same thing, smaller scale.

–Lt. Guderi Szaken, NPIPD

I prophesied my own death. I knew it was going to happen. But that doesn't change anything. I just want to give my people an equal chance, the same opportunities as everyone else. I want to provide the same thing for my family. And I refuse to let death stop me from getting it done.

– Vaerzza Ghorrdzaerskourz, Ekilati Onati boss

Seas of the Ancients

Imperial Navy Depots provide extensive repair and construction facilities and service large portions of the fleet at any given time. They are allocated one per sector with two exceptions: Delphi sector has two and the Spinward Marches has none. Depots always have a Class A starport since shipyards that can build interstellar spacecraft must be present. Rarely restricted to a single world, most depots utilise multiple planets in a single star system. Depots are secure facilities and generally inhabited by naval and marine personnel, and civilian contractors only. High-level security clearances are required for all present. New starship prototypes are often built and tested at Depots, so access is highly restricted. One must be on active duty in the navy or marines or have special permission to enter a depot system. For a complete description of the Core sector Depot, located in Mekee, refer to page 145 of *The Third Imperium*.

Depot systems are typically assigned an Amber Zone travel advisory to indicate that one should not enter the system without the express consent of the Imperial Navy. Doing so without permission can get one's ship incinerated. The navy takes incursions seriously and tends towards shooting first and asking questions later when unexpected arrivals appear.

Core's Depot is a special world since it is believed to be an Ancients site. While not located on any of the official Liner Routes described on page 21, the Travellers are given special permission to visit Depot during a run of either the Imperial, Annililik or Confederate Route (see Liner Routes on page 23). This unofficial Depot 'spur' is granted due to the presence of two distinguished passengers on the *Ventura Fortuna*; one the war hero Admiral Dadanda Oliar, the other a renowned archaeologist, Dr. Visantha Pruta. Both have specific reasons for wanting to travel to Depot and each has the cachet to get permission to visit the highly restricted world. Obtaining permission may occur over the course of a cruise, or it might happen while the *Ventura Fortuna* is in port for a few weeks and a messenger is sent to Depot to ask for permission, then returning with the affirmative response. Otherwise, the Referee may determine that a message was sent to Depot to request permission via the Express Boat Network and the message is received later in the cruise. Make sure to keep travel distances and jump times in mind when determining the turnaround time for messages. The anticipation may be played for additional drama with the passengers eagerly awaiting the response during a cruise to other worlds.

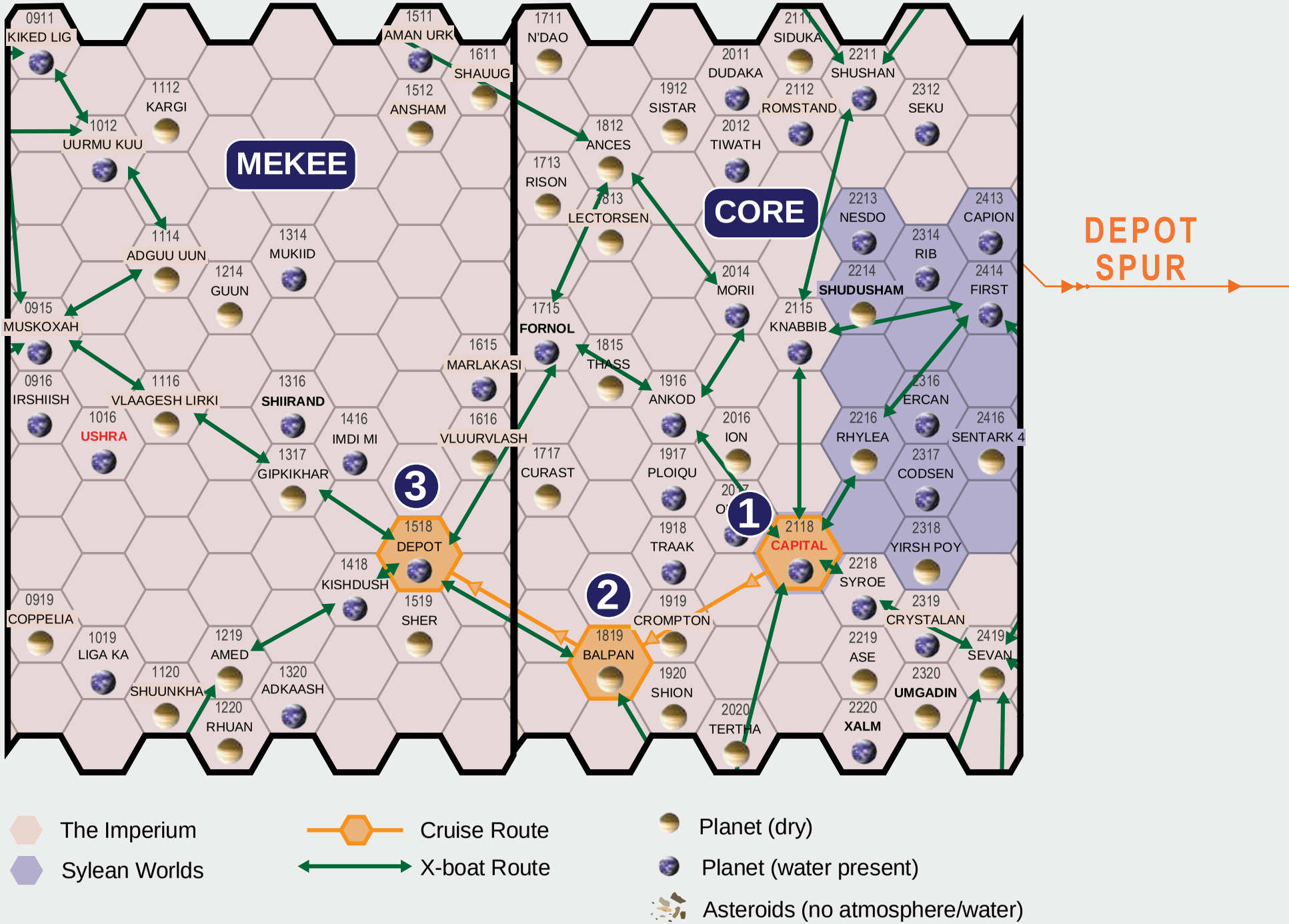
If the Depot spur is to be taken while they cruise the Imperial or Annililik Routes, the liner must start the spur from Capital, going first to Balpan and then to Depot. If it is taken from the Confederate Route, it departs from Bogustin, going first to Adkaash and then to Depot. Both of these are two-jump departures from their respective routes, requiring an addition of over a month to the cruise. Being allowed to visit Depot is a prestigious award, the granting of which will be met with unanimous approval from the posh passenger list of the *Ventura Fortuna*.

The visit to Depot is a special affair and exciting enough in its own right but something strange happens to the *Ventura Fortuna* when it arrives in-system. Naalir is inexplicably drawn to the waterworld, feeling an unquenchable desire to plumb its depths. The obsession causes a stir aboard the liner and the Travellers must handle what quickly becomes a volatile and challenging situation.

Requirements and Preliminaries

To conduct this adventure, the Travellers must be operating the *Ventura Fortuna* along the Annililik, Confederate or Imperial Route. Prior to embarking on one of these routes, two key passengers must be included on the roster: Admiral Dadanda Oliar and Dr. Visantha Pruta. Both play key roles in this adventure. These passengers should join at the beginning of the voyage and will make it clear that they are attempting to secure passage to the Depot system for the liner.

Seas of the Ancients is the one adventure of Act 1 in which the Travellers *must* discover the true nature the ship, if they have not already; they must learn of about Naalir and the presence of the *Velos tis Alitheia* in the belly of the *Ventura Fortuna*. The Referee may optionally have the revelation occur at the beginning of the adventure but at latest, it must occur when the crisis begins to develop at Depot. See Moment of Truth on page 19 for guidance on conducting the revelation.


MEKEE
CORE
DEPOT SPUR
0911 KIKED LIG
1112 KARGI
1012 UURMU KUU
1114 ADGUU UUN
1214 GUUN
1314 MUKIID
0915 MUSKOXAH
0916 IRSHIISH
1016 USHRA
1116 VLAAGESH LIRKI
1316 SHIIRAND
1416 IMDI MI
1317 GIPKIKHAR
1518 DEPOT
1418 KISHDUSH
1519 SHER
0919 COPPELIA
1019 LIGA KA
1120 SHUUNKHA
1219 AMED
1320 ADKAASH
1220 RHUAN
1511 AMAN URK
1611 SHAUUG
1512 ANSHAM
1615 MARLAKASI
1616 VLUURVLASH
1711 N'DAO
1812 ANCES
1713 RISON
1813 LECTORSEN
1715 FORNOL
1815 THASS
1717 CURAST
1819 BALPAN
1912 SISTAR
2011 DUDAKA
2012 TIWATH
2014 MORII
1916 ANKOD
2016 ION
1917 PLOIQU
1918 TRAAK
1919 CROMPTON
1920 SHION
2020 TERTHA
2111 SIDUKA
2211 SHUSHAN
2112 ROMSTAND
2115 KNABBIB
2118 CAPITAL
2312 SEKU
2213 NESDO
2314 RIB
2214 SHUDUSHAM
2413 CAPION
2414 FIRST
2316 ERCAN
2216 RHYLEA
2416 SENTARK 4
2317 CODSEN
2318 YIRSH POY
2218 SYROE
2319 CRYSTALAN
2219 ASE
2419 SEVAN
2320 UMGADIN
2220 XALM
1
2
3
The Imperium
Sylean Worlds
Cruise Route
X-boat Route
Planet (dry)
Planet (water present)
Asteroids (no atmosphere/water)

WHO YOU KNOW

This adventure has a keen political element to it. It is important to note who is on the *Ventura Fortuna* upon arrival at Depot. We have established that Admiral Dadanda Oliar and Dr. Visantha Pruta are present, both of whom can be of assistance; however, events in Seas of the Ancients result in a tense military and political standoff. The presence of the *Ventura Fortuna* in the system can end up being an asset that prevents a world from being destroyed. Its passenger roster and the Travellers themselves might have the pull to change the course of the narrative as the tension rises.

Optionally plan ahead by selecting passengers (instead of determining them randomly) using the tables under Luxury Passage on page 45 of the *Singularity Sourcebook*. Passengers of all four types – Underworld, Influencer, Political and Wealth – can be of assistance in this adventure. If the Travellers do not recognise their value, have one of the passengers speak up. A powerful crimelord knows secret ways to bypass a naval blockade. An influencer knows how to draw attention to the situation, which could bring bad press to the Quarantine Agency for its excesses. A wealthy financier has contracts with the Imperial Navy and can reach out to Depot's high-ranking naval officers. Political passengers can use diplomacy to get them out of trouble.

Interaction with passengers is a key aspect of Act 1 but they become critical participants in the story after the ship's crew and its mysterious conscious intelligence are suddenly 'absent'. As things escalate towards a crisis, first when the ship's crew becomes defunct and later when a conflict arises between the Imperial Navy and Quarantine Agency, distinctive passengers of the *Ventura Fortuna* volunteer to help the Travellers navigate the perilous waters in which they find themselves.

Seas of the Ancients serves well as the final adventure of the first act. As stated in Departures on page 147, the adventures in this act of the campaign may be conducted in any order desired, including this one. The nature of this adventure and the things that it uncovers make it a fine segue to the concluding narrative described in Winds of Change on page 196. Naalir is deeply affected by events in this Departure and advancing the CI to the next stage of its evolution makes sense. However, it is not a requirement. A creative Referee may still organise these adventures in any order desired.

INTRODUCTION

Seas of the Ancients occurs entirely in the Depot (Core: 1518, A86A56A-F) system. The Travellers arrive, ostensibly to engage in military tourism and host the launch of an archaeological expedition. However, the moment they emerge from jump, things go haywire. While the *Ventura Fortuna* continues to operate as designed, its android crew immediately goes defunct. They simply stop in their tracks and remain 'frozen' in whatever positions they were in when the ship exited jump. Where they are and what they are doing depends on what roles they been assigned. Keep these roles in mind relative to those held by the Travellers. For example, a Traveller might be the astrogator of the ship but an android crewmember might be the pilot. The moment the ship emerges from jumpspace, the Traveller notices that their cohort is no longer responsive – nor are they piloting the ship! They simply sit there, eyes glazed over, looking straight ahead.

The Travellers must first address this crisis before taking on the next one. There might be some terrifying moments as they address problems that happen when a fully operational ship suddenly has no crew in key positions. If the Travellers do not yet know about Naalir, this event might confuse them. They have seen some strange things aboard the *Ventura Fortuna* but this one is above and beyond their previous experiences. In addition, the Travellers must explain this strange phenomenon to the passengers. Many of the frozen crewmembers are in mid-step in the ship's hallways, duty stations and anywhere else where they were frozen in their tracks, creating quite the spectacle. It may very well cause a panic if the Travellers do not do something to ease the passengers' fears.

Something strange is happening on Depot Prime, the system mainworld and host to the Core's primary Imperial Navy depot. Depot Prime is a waterworld with no land masses jutting above the surface. Its oceans are extremely deep, extending almost 13,000 metres to their abyssal depths. A signal of unknown origin is emanating from the deep. The Imperial Research Directorate – the agency that runs the Imperial Research Stations – has long believed there is an Ancients site on Depot Prime but have never been able to locate any ruins or other empirical evidence.

The first crisis leads to the next when Naalir suddenly initiates the ship's approach to Depot Prime, unfortunately immediately after the Imperial Navy declares a full-scale interdiction of the planet. All Depot systems bear the Amber Zone designation to guarantee their security and limit access but signals emanating from the deep elicit a complete restriction of the planet until further notice, effectively making Depot a Red Zone. Naval Command shuts down all traffic except that of military ships. Couriers are immediately refuelled and sent to neighbouring star systems to call in support to handle the crisis but at best, help is two weeks away. Naalir's unremitting approach to Depot Prime must be stopped or the *Ventura Fortuna* will be destroyed. The Travellers must figure out a way to stop an unresponsive conscious intelligence from taking them straight into the proverbial dragon's maw.

Should they wriggle their way out of this sticky situation without being incinerated by system defence spacecraft, they will be shepherded into an orbital internment group, a community of ships that came to Depot Prime for various reasons but who are now blocked from getting there. Meanwhile, Naalir, now awakened from its trance, tells the Travellers that it must commune with the entity that is sending signals from Depot Prime. Getting to the surface of the planet will be difficult because of the blockade but each of the ships in the internment group offers potential assistance.

By hook or by crook, the Travellers find a way to the planet. Dr. Pruta is an excellent choice to bring along. Her impressive knowledge of Ancients sites and technology will be an asset when they figure out where the signal is coming from and how to reach the depths of Depot Prime's seas. The signal is deep beneath the waves and they are going to need a special vehicle to get there, a submarine with an increased dive capabilities and a supercavitating engine. The *Trencher* (described on page 168) is just such a vehicle.

Once there, they have the opportunity to discover a bona fide Ancients site, one which has not been touched for eons and never before by Imperial citizens. If they have brought Dr. Pruta – or another authority from among their crew – they find that this is no normal Ancients site. First, it is not a 'site' at all but roving alien technology, slowly moving in the abyssal depths, evading detection with advanced stealth technology. Second, there are actually *two* distinct alien entities within kilometres of each other, each with wildly exotic designs and unknown purposes. The Travellers must find a way to investigate more closely to uncover their mysteries.

Meanwhile, above Depot Prime, a conflict brews between the navy and Imperial Quarantine Agency regarding what to do about this dangerous situation. A reactionary Quarantine admiral wants to eliminate the problem by 'scrubbing' the world of all life, thereby 'saving' the Imperium from the perceived danger.

Stuck on the planet, grappling with the mystery, the Travellers must find a way to solve the problem before a trigger-happy Imperial military force unleashes armageddon. The question is whether they will have time to expose the mystery of this unique archaeological site before forces beyond their control destroy it all, likely ending their lives in the process.

TIMELINE

In Seas of the Ancients, many events happen simultaneously. The Travellers become embroiled in a situation that might dictate the fate of a world and a very important one at that. The primary narrative takes them to the surface of Depot Prime where the mystery of the alien emanations must be solved. However, there are other aspects to the story that might draw them in, such as the imminent destruction of the planet by the Imperial Quarantine Agency.

The timeline may be used to assist the Referee to keep track of the two plot threads that happen simultaneously. Keep in mind that the time taken might vary for each. The days and durations of each event listed are only guidelines. However, for the drama of the adventure to unfold with maximum impact, the concurrent timelines should approximate what is listed below, culminating in an epic showdown with Quarantine as the adventure reaches its climax.

Timeline

	Events	
Day	**Depot Prime**	**Quarantine Agency Task Force**
1	The *Ventura Fortuna* and Quarantine Agency task force exit jump in Depot system. The android crew freeze in their tracks. Naalir is drawn to alien emanations from Depot Prime.	
2	Naalir wakes from the 'slumber' imposed upon it by the emanations.	Admiral Tevonti Peque of the Quarantine Agency begins to evaluate the threat level.
2–7	Holding Pattern begins (see page 158). The Travellers interact with other interned ships.	Peque initiates an investigation and sends for siege engines, which should arrive in a minimum of two weeks.
8–15	The Travellers find a way to the surface of Depot Prime and search for transportation to the Ancients site.	Peque commandeers Imperial Navy fleet elements, combines them with the task force and interdicts Depot Prime.
16–19	The Travellers search for the source of the emanations.	The siege engines arrive at the inner planetoid belt and begin selecting and weaponising projectiles.
20–24	The Travellers find the source of the emanations and investigate the sites.	The first projectiles are completed by the siege engines and they begin constructing larger ones.
25	The Travellers leave the site after communing with the alien entities.	Admiral Peque determines that the alien structures pose an 'intractable' threat and orders the 'scrubbing' of Depot Prime.
26–30	The Travellers must escape Depot Prime before it is destroyed.	Peque selects key strategic targets on the planet for the task force and the siege engines fire their first rounds while preparing more attacks.

THE CALL

When the *Ventura Fortuna* arrives in system, the passengers are initially excited about the unique opportunity to see an Imperial Navy depot but their hopes are quickly dispelled. Naalir is 'called' by an entity of some sort deep within Depot's oceans. The ship's functions immediately degrade, electronic systems flicker on and off, the engines sputter and the Intellect program goes offline. As described in the *Singularity Sourcebook*, the ship operates with two computer systems; one a simple Computer/10bis and the other the advanced system that houses Naalir's conscious intelligence. With the CI inoperative and the ship's crew defunct, the Travellers are left with a rudimentary computer and skeleton crew to operate the ship. All computer functions must be performed manually without aid of voice controls. Things are clearly in disarray and something is not right with Naalir.

From deep within Depot Prime's oceans, there is an alien presence transmitting signals of some sort, using communications technology far beyond the capabilities of the Imperium. While no one can understand the content of these emanations, Naalir is receiving the data and it has affected the CI's ability to function. The Imperial Navy is aware that something is being transmitted from the depths but they do not have the technology to properly analyse or decipher its content.

There are other signs that things are amiss as well. The mysterious noises and activity in the vault (mentioned in Curiouser and Curiouser on page 15) also change, at first becoming completely silent and then building in activity to the point where a crescendo of noise and vibration pulsates from the secured room. Something is happening there but it is impossible to determine exactly what it is.

This sequence of events should be played as a series of crises that the Travellers must address, including the following:

- Immediately upon exit from jumpspace, the ship's electronic systems flicker on and off. Alarms go off throughout the ship.
- Naalir's android avatars, including Captain Eilerfaust, freeze in their tracks, leaving the ship in the hands of the Travellers.
- Recall the ship's manoeuvre vector before jumping to Depot. They continue to travel at the same speed and in a random direction. Appoint numbers 1–6 to a hexagon, assign 1 to the direction of Depot Prime and roll 1D to determine which direction the ship is headed. If their vector was zero before jump, then there is no need to determine this; they emerge from jump at approximately 100 diameters from the planet and sit in stasis.

Use the following Random Events table to generate two to three random problems for the Travellers to handle.

Random Events

1D	Event
1	The ship's comms go inoperative before the *Ventura Fortuna* initiates communication with Depot Highport. A squadron of orbital defence corvettes (ODCs) is sent to investigate (or possibly incinerate) what they believe is an unresponsive intruder.
2	If any of Naalir's avatars are engineers, the drives and systems they manage require manual attention. For example, the power plant might overload or the manoeuvre drive might become inoperable. Someone must be dispatched post haste to address the problem.
3	The weapon systems go haywire and start targeting random ships. This is an especially severe problem since most of the ships in Depot are military craft which do not take kindly to being targeted.
4	Security to the 'captain's hold' and the hidden walls that conceal the *Velos tis Alitheia* are revealed. There is the risk that the passengers can discover these hidden sections, revealing the true nature of the *Ventura Fortuna* unless the Travellers can manually reseal them.
5	Using the ship's comms systems, Naalir starts transmitting alien code in an effort to respond to the call. If the Travellers cannot prevent this from happening, it will leave tell-tale signs of its identity which could have repercussions later in the campaign.
6	The vault opens and the lattice is exposed. It starts rapidly extending its tendrils into the surrounding sections, including the cargo hold, crew quarters, and drive room. The tendrils are essentially directionless and harmless but if any of the passengers were to notice, it could start a great deal of trouble.

IS IT HOT IN HERE?

If Random Event #6 happens, the vault starts to overheat, causing the staterooms above and the fuel tanks below to become uncomfortably and dangerously hot. The staterooms can be evacuated but keep in mind that passengers aboard the *Ventura Fortuna* are not accustomed to being inconvenienced. They are going to want to be properly cared for or compensated for their discomfort. However, the fuel tanks are a much more pressing problem. For whatever reason, the convection is travelling downward much more aggressively than it is upward. While heat going upward makes the staterooms unliveable, the heat going downward threatens to affect the ship's drives, possibly resulting in expensive repair work or worse, a fuel explosion.

The Travellers should be motivated to solve these problems quickly but there does not seem to be much they can do. They will have to be creative to solve problems that the ship's computer and automated systems are unable to help them with.

If they attempt to stir Naalir, either at its main interface in the *Velos tis Aletheia* (supposing that they know about its presence yet), or by rousing the Captain Eilerfaust avatar, they might be able to get the vault to close and stop the structure within from endangering the ship, overriding whatever processes Naalir is working on. Stirring Naalir requires a Very Difficult (12+) Electronics (computers) check (1D hours, EDU). Waking the Eilerfaust avatar, thereby reconnecting with Naalir, requires a Difficult (10+) Persuasion check (SOC). Successfully doing either advances the Travellers to A Startling Wakeup. If they fail at one or both checks, they must find another way to conceal the exposure of the structure in the vault.

These events are intended to convey a sense of chaos, problems that the Travellers must solve immediately lest they risk exposing the true nature of their ship to the passengers. They should be played out one after another, with a few overlapping, forcing the Travellers to split up to take on more than one challenge at a time. Once they get everything under control, they might feel a sense of relief or they might be on edge, thinking that yet another problem is about to surface.

A STARTLING WAKEUP

Just as things come to a head, Naalir wakes up, as if from a dream. At the outset, this adventure does not require that the Travellers know the truth about their ship but if they have not yet learned of its true nature, it is time for Naalir to come clean and have the discussion with them described in Moment of Truth on page 19.

The timing of this awakening is largely up to the Referee. Naalir is attempting to reach orbit, somewhere within 1–10 diameters of Depot Prime. It is trying to commune with the alien entity that froze it in its tracks upon emergence from jump. For whatever reason, Naalir is motivated to approach the planet like a moth to a flame. Unfortunately, in its mesmerised state, Naalir is completely ignorant of the dangers it faces upon approach or those imposed upon its crew and passengers. This is no backwater system lacking system defence; it is the depot system of the Core, a keystone world of the Imperium, a highly secure and well-defended military installation equipped with the top technology available in the sector. While Naalir blithely approaches the planet, it draws the attention of naval defence forces that threaten to destroy it.

As the *Ventura Fortuna* closes with Depot Prime, the navy dispatches an orbital defence corvette (ODC) to investigate the strange behaviour of the liner. The approach of the ODC provides additional motivation to handle the ship's problems quickly. The interception should occur somewhere between the 100-diameter and 10-diameter limit of Depot Prime. When the navy arrives to board them, it would be disastrous if they discover the true nature of the ship.

ORBITAL DEFENCE CORVETTE

CLASS: Goshawk

The Goshawk is essentially a purpose-built System Defence Boat designed less for complete system defence than the protection of a single gravity well. The navy sometimes uses them in lieu of SDBs when their mission is to defend a single location rather than covering an entire system. Alternative versions pack a triple missile rack instead of the pulse laser, appointing virtually all remaining space to ammunition storage.

TL15		Tons	Cost (MCr)
Hull	100 tons, Streamlined, Reinforced	—	9
	Aerofins	5	0.5
	Radiation Shielding	—	2.5
Armour	Bonded Superdense, Armour: 12	11.52	5.76
M-Drive	Thrust 6	6	12
Power Plant	Fusion (TL15), Power 105	5.25	10.5
Fuel Tanks	8 weeks of operation	1	—
Bridge	Holographic Controls	10	6.25
Computer	Computer/20	—	5
Sensors	Advanced	5	5.3
	Sensor Station	1	0.5
	Countermeasures Suite	2	4
	Life Scanner Analysis Suite	1	4
Weapons	Triple Turret (accurate, high yield, pulse lasers)	1	5.5
Hardened	Basic Ship Systems	—	2.5
	Manoeuvre Drive	—	6
	Sensors	—	6.65
	Weapons	—	2.75
Systems	Fuel Scoops	—	—
	Armouries x2	2	0.5
	Breaching Tube	3	3
	Forced Linkage Apparatus (advanced)	2	0.5
	Heavy Grappling Arm	6	3
	Tow Cable	1	0.005
Staterooms	Standard x5	20	2.5
	Barracks x5	8	0.4
Software	Manoeuvre	—	—
	Intellect	—	—
	Library	—	—
	Evade/1	—	1
	Fire Control/2	—	4
Common Areas		5	0.5
Cargo		4	—

Crew

Captain, Pilots x3, Gunners x2, Sensor Operators x3, Marines x8

Hull: 44

Running Costs

MAINTENANCE COST

Cr8208/month

PURCHASE COST

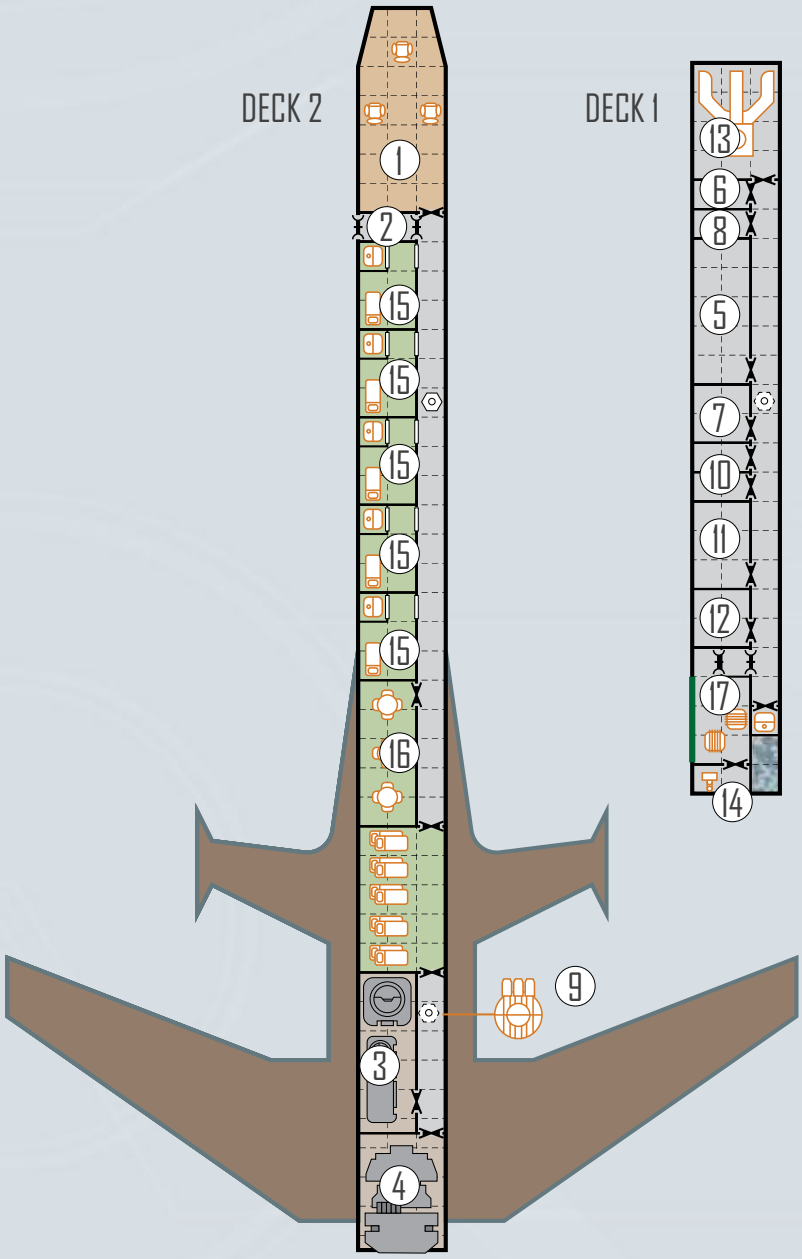
MCr98.49

Power Requirements

Basic Ship Systems	20
Manoeuvre Drive	60
Sensors	8
Weapons	13

GOSHAWK-CLASS ORBITAL DEFENCE CORVETTE

1 square = 0.5 Ton



LEGEND

1. Bridge
2. Airlock
3. Power plant
4. M-drive
5. Advanced sensors
6. Sensor station
7. Countermeasures suite
8. Life scanner analysis suite
9. Triple turret
10. Armouries
11. Breaching tube
12. Forced linkage apparatus
13. Heavy grappling arm
14. Tow cable
15. Staterooms
16. Common areas
17. Cargo

BOARDING AND INSPECTION

The Goshawk ODC that pursues the Travellers demands that they stand down, decelerate and prepare for boarding. It targets the *Ventura Fortuna*, informing them that if they do not comply, they risk being destroyed.

Initially, the Travellers do not have control of their ship. Naalir is mindlessly flying towards its destination, Depot Prime. Unfortunately, this sets the stage for confrontation and the *Ventura Fortuna* simply cannot contend with an armed and armoured ODC.

If the Travellers do nothing, the Goshawk fires upon them and wreaks havoc on the liner regardless of its reputation or which distinguished passengers are aboard. However, if they communicate with the ODC and tell them that they have lost control of the ship, they might be able to convince the Goshawk to board them *during* flight toward Depot Prime. After they reach the halfway point, the ship proceeds to decelerate, in preparation for what, no one knows; Naalir is not talking.

The ODC deploys its full marine complement as a boarding party. This will spell trouble if the Travellers cannot get through to Naalir to force it to stop. With the vault possibly open and overheating, the avatars all frozen in place and the ship mindlessly barrelling ahead to the planet, Naalir will arouse suspicion and might even tip off the marines that an alien intelligence is at work. The response will be to evacuate the ship, detains its crew and passengers, and disable its drives, towing it to a safe location for further inspection and leaving Naalir completely vulnerable.

Meanwhile, the Travellers, shorthanded and fresh from dealing with numerous crises, must somehow prevent catastrophe from happening. How they do that is up to them, but they have numerous resources at their disposal:

- **Reputation**. The *Ventura Fortuna* is no ordinary ship, no run-of-the-mill subsidised liner. It is one of the most luxurious conveyances in the Core – its reputation precedes it. It has conveyed the wealthiest financiers, the most powerful megacorporate officers, be-medalled war heroes, haughty princesses, and sector-wide media stars. Even the most trigger-happy naval ensigns might pause before simply incinerating this ship. It is *that* well known.
- **Passengers**. If the entreaties of Admiral Oliar and Dr. Pruta are not sufficient to stay the predatory instincts of orbital defence forces, then perhaps a high-ranking noble, the star of everyone's favourite holovideo, or the influential chief executive officer of a universally known media company aboard the ship will curb the navy's intentions to blow the liner up. It all depends on who the passengers are, as determined by the Referee and the Travellers' efforts to convey their presence on the ship.
- **Capabilities**. The *Ventura Fortuna* is not a warship. That much is clear. Its weapons are concealed but it is obvious that the ship does not have major armaments. A quick sensory scan of its power signature shows that it does not have the ability to power a major weapons system. Alternatively, if it is thought to be some sort of spy ship, its sensors – whose active emanations can be detected by naval ships – are sorely lacking and would give it little ability to fight or detect long-distance targets with any degree of accuracy. The sensors of the *Velos tis Alitheia* are not operational at this point and do not give off a signal.
- **The Travellers themselves**. Creative use of skills, negotiation tactics and good conversational abilities can save the Travellers' skins. Simply explaining to naval authorities that the ship is suffering from some sort of 'automation malfunction' can probably save them from being destroyed. In addition, the ship will not attempt to prevent any boarding activities performed by marine forces. If the Travellers can successfully bide their time and get Naalir to conceal tell-tale signs of its presence, the boarding parties that make their way onto the ship will not discover anything unusual. As far as what excuses the Travellers come up with, they will have to be careful. Some form of experimental automation (without mentioning the acronyms 'AI' or 'CI'), or even a crew problem, might work best.

The Referee must determine how close the Travellers' brush with destruction and death should be. It might be limited to some terse conversations with naval forces or even some shots fired across the bow. The tension may be ramped up by the approach of one or more missile salvoes, each bearing the certainty of annihilation for the wayward liner.

The ship does not have to be damaged for this encounter to be fraught with tension and excitement. The pursuit itself will provide the desired action. If a boarding action occurs – complete with the use of forced linkage equipment, breaching tubes, or grappling arms – and marines board the ship, the Travellers have an additional level of chaos to deal with.

At an opportune moment, Naalir returns to consciousness just in time but remains impaired. It resumes consciousness and communicates to the Travellers that something on the surface (or beneath the surface) of the planet has called to its mind. It cannot pry itself free and insists they must investigate further but getting down to the surface of Depot Prime is going to be a challenge.

HOLDING PATTERN

After surviving a run-in with trigger-happy orbital defence forces, the Travellers are directed – or towed – to establish geosynchronous orbit in a position directly over the Depot Prime downport and naval base, at a distance of approximately one planetary diameter. When they reach the coordinates, they discover they are not alone.

The *Ventura Fortuna* is not the only ship relegated to a holding pattern over Depot Prime. There are several, including a close escort whose commanding officer is up for court martial, a far trader who finagled her way into close orbit to finalise a speculative trade deal (risking obliteration just so she could beat her competitors) and a flotilla of Uugniian pilgrims (Vilani natives who have come to their ancestral homeworld), all of whom are now accompanied by the Travellers' wayward luxury liner that dangerously wandered into an interdicted orbital zone.

The navy corrals all the ships into a tightly organised bunch, approximately one diameter from Depot Prime, presumably so that it will be easy to keep track of them but possibly so that a single missile salvo will wipe them all out if push comes to shove. There is a lot going on the surface of the planet. The navy is distracted by the disturbance beneath the waves of their watery world but still keep a small complement of patrol ships on alert near the little flotilla of captured ships.

If the Travellers do not think of it first, the ships start communicating with each other. The speakers for each ship are:

- Ensign Millen C. Ford, commander of the *Fit of Pique*, a Gazelle close escort. The commander is in big trouble for firing on a suspected pirate in the Shiirand system before confirming its identity. He and members of his crew are under investigation for the incident. Most of the crew have been evacuated but he and his co-conspirators remain, making the *Fit* effectively an orbital brig.
- Captain Ziznia Dantu is late on the mortgage payments for her ship, the *Valued Friend*, an Empress Marava far trader. That might explain why she was willing to risk incineration at the hands of the ODCs that repeatedly ordered her to stand down as she approached the interdicted planet. Dantu has a security clearance to trade at Depot Prime and the familiarity of her ship might be the only thing that kept her from being destroyed. Her crew is furious. Some are ready to mutiny at any moment. The trader is carrying four passengers from Brygella – the graduate students who have come to work with Dr. Pruta. This can be played as a serendipitous discovery once the Travellers have made contact with the beleaguered Captain Dantu.
- Shaman Uzaashma, nominal leader of a group of 200 pilgrims, presides over a ragtag collection of starships and small craft whose occupants want to reach the surface of Depot Prime to conduct religious rituals. The Uugniian pilgrims descend from the original Uugniians, who were forced off the planet centuries ago when the world was designated to become an Imperial Naval depot. They have retained their rights to return to the planet from time-to-time to perform the rituals and ceremonies of their ancestors.

The odd collection of ships becomes a temporary exile community, with personalities from each reaching out to the others. All are motivated to get to the surface below, regardless of the danger. Ensign Ford wants to defend himself at a military court tribunal. Captain Dantu, oblivious to the dangers posed by the navy – or her own crew for that matter – wants to finalise that trade deal and get her mortgage paid. Uzaashma wants to escort his flock to the surface to pray and honour their ancestors. He is seemingly oblivious to the dangers currently posed to the world.

If the Travellers do not think of it first, at some point, someone on one or more of the ships suggests that each of them link their airlocks. There is the possibility that the group will be held in stasis for an extensive period of time and pooling resources and building a community might be their best bet. They can share life support, swap stories and maybe even figure a way out of this mess. Dependence on one another is perhaps the best way that occupants of these ships can get through the crisis.

The Travellers might see an opportunity to get to the surface by partnering with one or more of the members of the exile community.

FIT OF PIQUE

The *Fit of Pique* is an Imperial Navy starship; therefore, a case can be made that its services are needed. It sounds as if Commander Ford is in *big* trouble. He disobeyed orders in the Shiirand system and his career is likely over. At worst, he will be doing time at the military prison on nearby Sher. Most of his crew have been evacuated and are being questioned at the highport. His loyalists remain, leaving only a skeleton crew, barely capable of operating the ship. If any of the Travellers or passengers are ex-navy, they might be able to pull some strings to use the *Fit* to get to the surface. Let them formulate an appropriate plan and make a Difficult (10+) Admin check (2D hours, SOC) to convince Depot Naval Command that there is a reason to bring the *Fit* to the downport, including passengers who have been transferred from the *Ventura Fortuna* for appropriate reasons.

VALUED FRIEND

The weakest claim to surface access might seemingly be that of the *Valued Friend* but Captain Dantu's cargo might change a few minds. She has acquired 40 tons of advanced electronics from TL15 Shibashliim and not just *any* electronics, but prototypes that work well with sensory and communications systems; just what is needed to help address the current crisis on the planet. What Dantu has in luck she lacks in good negotiation skills. If the Travellers convince her that they can be of assistance to break through the blockade for emergency delivery of the much-needed parts, she might let them aboard for the descent into the gravity well. They would need to lend a hand with a successful Difficult (10+) Broker (INT) check to convince Naval Procurement to run the request up the command chain in order to gain landing privileges.

RAMSHACKLE PILGRIM SHIPS

Conversely, the Uugniian pilgrims might have the strongest claim to surface access. They possess cultural and religious exemptions that allow them virtually unfettered passage to Depot Prime. Their ancestors were relocated from the world centuries ago when the system was designated Core's Depot world but public sentiment in favour of the displaced natives helped them to obtain the exception. Their ships are clunky, poorly maintained death traps but because of the agreement they have with the Imperial Navy, they can typically come and go as they please. The Uugniians are subjected to the same detailed inspections as any other ship that is granted permission to land on Depot Prime but once within the atmosphere, they are essentially left to their own devices. Should the Travellers determine they have something to offer the Uugniians and this offer is accepted, they might be able to accompany them, posing as fellow pilgrims.

VELOS TIS ALITHEIA

One option they do *not* currently have is right under their noses. The Travellers have an impressive stealth ship hidden in the belly of the *Ventura Fortuna*. They might have been able to sneak down on their own, although doing so without the notice of other ships in the holding pattern would be a challenge. However, this is not an option since the *Velos tis Alitheia* computer system is none other than Naalir itself. With Naalir in less-than-fully-functional state, the *Velos* is paralysed for now unless they opt to 'fly blind' without the help of a computer.

IN CONCLUSION

Each of the solutions may be gained by allying with one or more of the crews of the interned ships and working up a plan with them to get to the surface. Skip ahead to Planetside on page 162 to learn more about what each can offer should the Travellers work with them. Knowing ahead of time where they will end up on the planet and what the conditions will be is useful information.

RUMOURS AND LIES

While sequestered in the community of starships above Depot Prime, the Travellers have the chance to interact with their crews and passengers. Likewise, they may allow members of their own passenger roster to meet, greet and visit the others. Keep in mind that the *Ventura Fortuna* serves an exclusive jet set of passengers, not all of whom will want to rub elbows with the 'unwashed masses' of other spacecraft. However, some will consider it to be an unexpected pleasure to meet exotic characters from around the Core. The odd mix of well-to-do liner passengers, a wayward military ship, a tramp trader and a procession of pilgrims could make for some rich interactions.

Perhaps surprisingly, the denizens of each ship are a rich source of information and rumours. For each ship that the Travellers visit, roll 1D to determine what they learn. Optionally, colour the interactions with the flavour of each ship. For example, the naval officers speak with a conspiratorial bent, the trader crew ask for help to wrest their ship from their dictatorial captain and the Uugniians are eager to visit their long lost planet.

Rumours

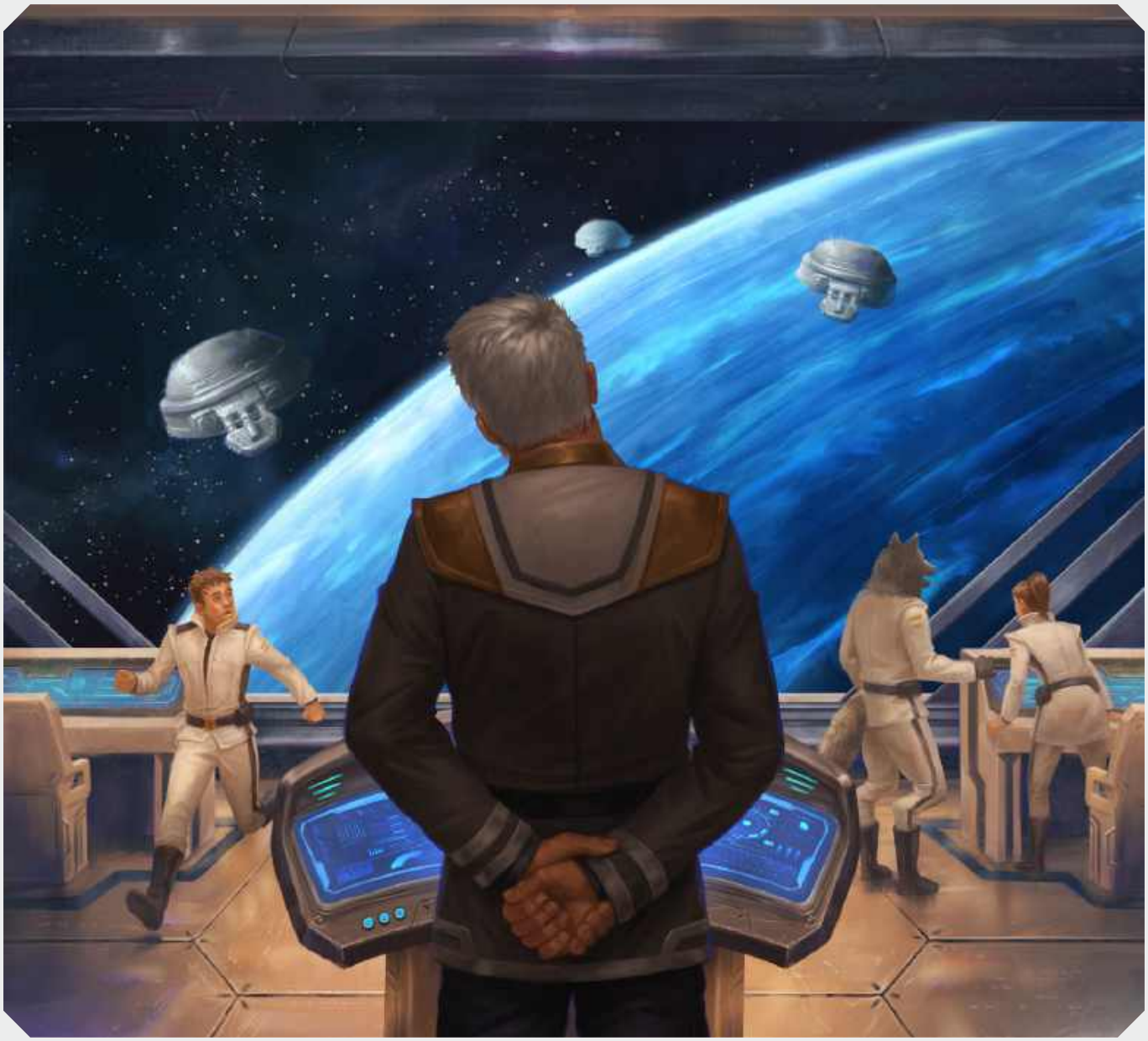
1D	Rumour or Lie
1	There is a crisis on the surface of Depot Prime that the navy is going to want to cover up. They have arranged the group of ships close together to destroy them all with one well-placed meson blast should they determine that witnesses are a liability. (A lie, mostly. The navy does not think anyone in this group has valuable or dangerous intel, nor do they have plans to summarily obliterate them.)
2	The Ancients site on Depot Prime has never been found but strange emanations from its deep-ocean abyssal plains have sporadically occurred for centuries. Many are only detectable by advanced sensory equipment. (True, but how the source of this rumour knows this is a mystery, as the navy has covered it up to the best of their ability.)
3	The reason the mysterious site has never been found is that it is mobile. It moves when threatened or when unwanted eyes might discover it. Currently it is on the exact opposite site of the world from Depot Prime Downport. (Interesting theory, but just a rumour at this point.)
4	The Ancients site on Depot Prime is not like others. Most are dormant sites with little activity. This one actively announces its presence from time-to-time but strangely enough, it cannot be found. The creators of this site are not the Ancients at all but some other species. (Could be onto something there!)
5	Getting to the surface of Depot Prime will be easy. The Imperial Navy has already permitted a half dozen ships to the surface, maybe spies or informants. All one must do is carry out the deception that they, too, have valuable information that should be personally brought planetside. (Not entirely inaccurate.)
6	The Imperial Quarantine Agency has been called to Depot. Not a good sign. They lean toward mass destruction of targets that pose an unknown threat to the Imperium. They have been known to wipe out planetary populations to prevent perceived threats escaping to other star systems. Whether or not the IQA deems Depot Prime a target for 'scrubbing' is unknown. (This is accurate – the IQA is indeed present on Depot Prime.)

THE TENSION BUILDS

Adding pressure to the mix, Captain Eilerfaust, who is now functioning, but not at peak performance, informs the Travellers that it is essential that they get to the surface of the planet to investigate the anomaly. Naalir remains semi-paralysed and unable to continue directing the *Ventura Fortuna* on its voyage. The CI cannot explain why it is so driven to convene with the source of the emanations. It hopes to find answers by getting down to the surface.

If that does not provide enough motivation, there is the presence of the Imperial Quarantine Agency. The ship types are ominous: a squadron of eight Arakoine strike cruisers (refer to page 251 of *High Guard*) and four Styx orbital bombardment cruisers, each of which is specifically designed to devastate targets on the surface of a planet. Their arrival and detection by sensors of the ships in the holding-pattern cluster should give everyone cause for concern.

Getting to the surface will require planning but ultimately, if the Travellers exhibit a degree of creativity and leverage other members of their orbital community, they should be able to find a way down.



ORBITAL BOMBARDMENT CRUISER

CLASS: Styx

Based on an old Vilani design, the Styx is a throwback to the days of the Pacification Campaigns, when the Imperium first set out to forcibly convince star systems to accept membership. The platform has rarely been deployed in recent centuries but did appear in the Solomani Rim War, in which it was used to devastate planetary targets on worlds that the Imperium designated as 'expendable mass destruction sites'. The Imperial Quarantine Agency maintains a few squadrons of Styxes in the event that a world within the Imperium's borders poses a threat.

TL15		Tons	Cost (MCr)
Hull	80,000 tons, Close Structure	—	3200
Armour	Bonded Superdense, Armour: 6	5,760	2880
M-Drive	Thrust 4	3,200	6400
J-Drive	Jump 3	6,005	9007.5
Power Plant	Fusion (TL15), Power 80,000	4,000	8000
Fuel Tanks	J-3, 8 weeks of operation	24,800	—
Bridge	Holographic Controls	60	500
Computer	Core/80	—	95
Sensors	Advanced	5	5.3
	Countermeasures Suite	2	4
	Distributed Arrays	10	10.6
	Enhanced Signal Processing	2	8
Weapons	Mass Driver Spinal Mount (TL 13)	8,000	3900
	Large Missile Bays (size reduction x3) x20		
	Medium Mass Driver Bays x8	800	480
	Medium Particle Beam Bays x8	800	320
	Triple Turrets (pulse lasers) x80	80	320
	Triple Turrets (sandcasters) x40	40	70
Ammunition	Mass Driver Spinal: 120 Attacks	6,000	—
	Missile Storage (28,800 missiles)	2,400	—
	Medium Mass Driver Bay (800 rounds)	3,200	—
Screens	Meson Screens x20	200	20
	Nuclear Dampers x12	120	120
Subcraft	Docking Spaces (40 tons) x4	176	44
	Pinnaces x4	—	38.72
	Docking Spaces (50 tons) x40	2,200	550
	Full Hangars (50 tons) x2	200	40
	Launch Tubes (50 tons) x2	1,000	500
	Recovery Decks (50 tons) x2	1,000	500
	Heavy Fighters x40	—	3062.8

Crew

Captain, Pilot, Astrogator, Engineers x194, Maintenance x40, Gunners x182, Administrators x20, Sensor Operators x5, Pinnace Pilots x4, Heavy Fighter Crew x80, Medics x10, Officers x26

Hull: 40,000

Running Costs

MAINTENANCE COST

MCr3.08/month

PURCHASE COST

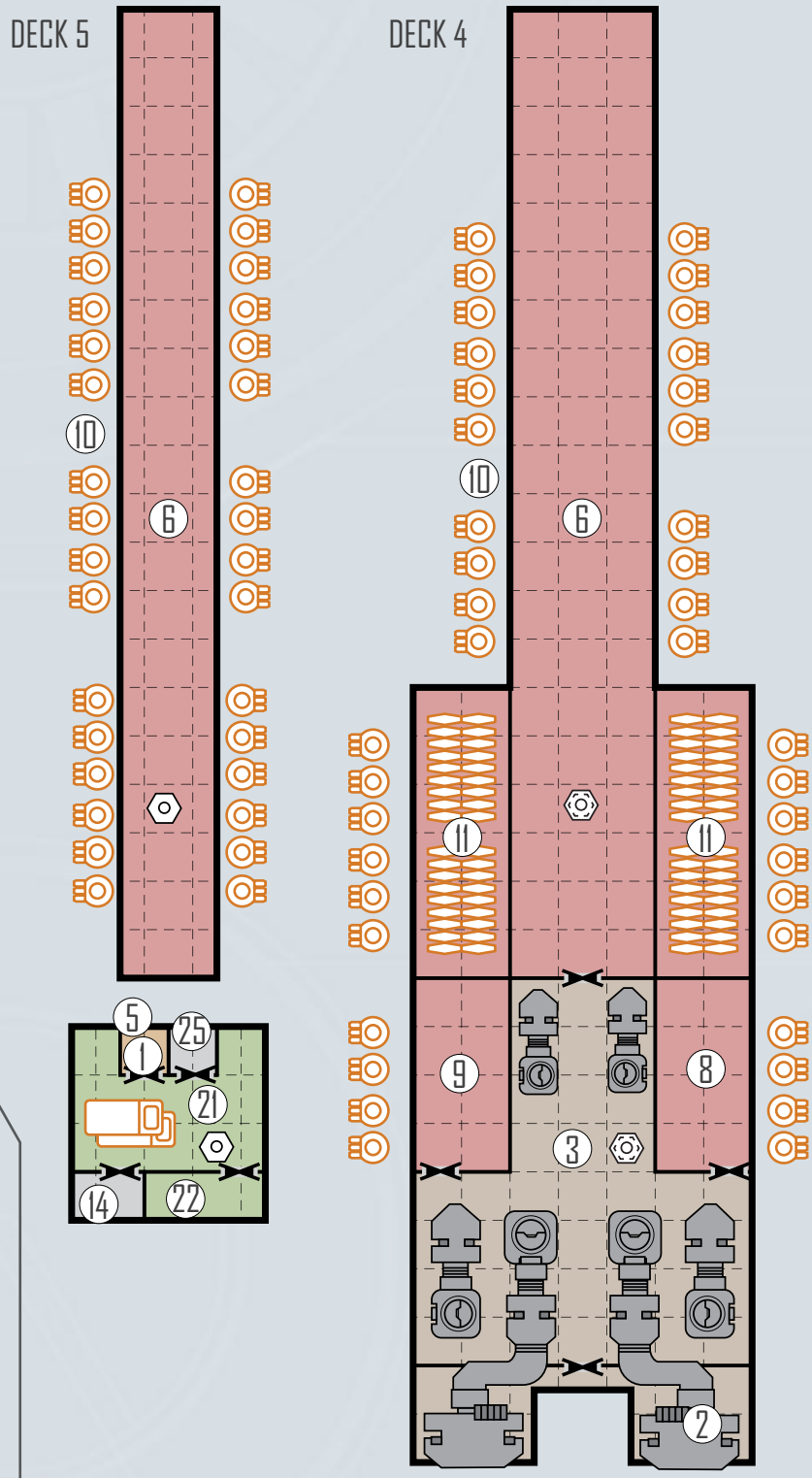
MCr41,105.42

TL15		Tons	Cost (MCr)
Systems	Fuel Processor (4,000 tons/day)	200	10
	Armouries x20	20	5
	Briefing Room	4	0.5
	Heavy Grappling Arms x2	12	6
	Medical Bays x10	40	20
	Tow Cable	800	4
	Workshops x8	48	7.2
Staterooms	Standard x263	1,052	131.5
Software	Manoeuvre	—	—
	Jump Control/3	—	0.3
	Intellect	—	—
	Library	—	—
	Anti-Hijack/3	—	10
	Advanced Fire Control/3	—	18
	Broad Spectrum EW	—	14
	Electronic Warfare/1	—	15
Common Areas		263	26.3
Cargo		501	—

Power Requirements

Basic Ship Systems
16,000
Manoeuvre Drive
32,000
Jump Drive
24,000
Sensors
21
Weapons
2,580
Screens
840
Fuel Processors
200
Launch Tubes
1,000
Recovery Decks
1,000
Medical Bay
10

STYX-CLASS ORBITAL BOMBARDMENT CRUISER

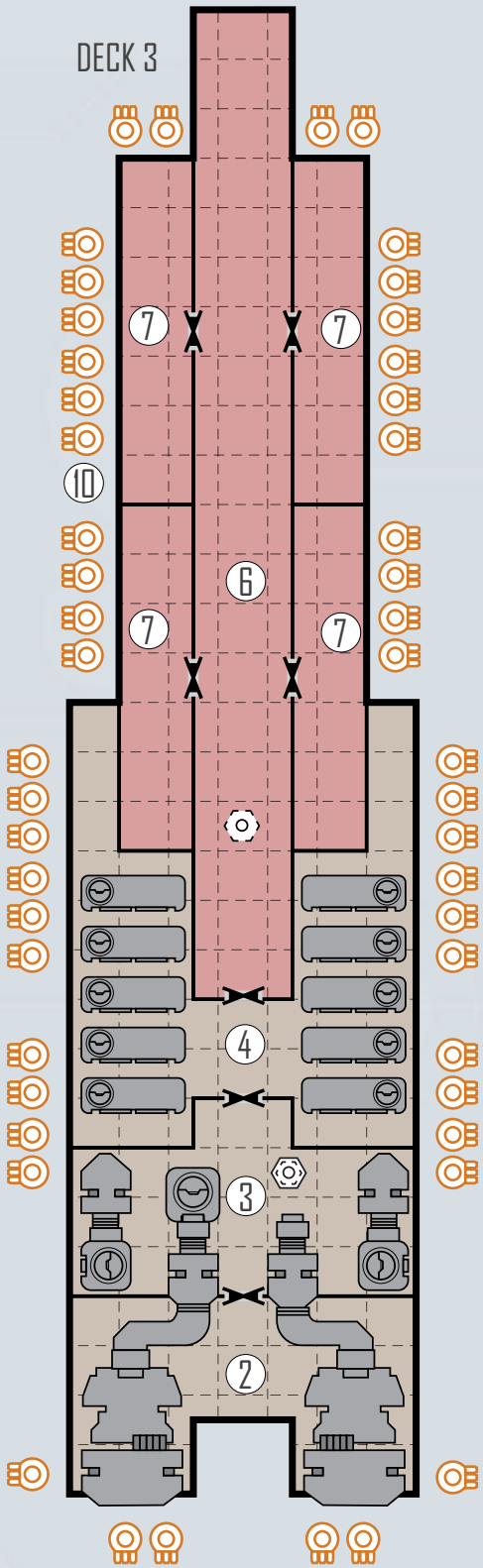


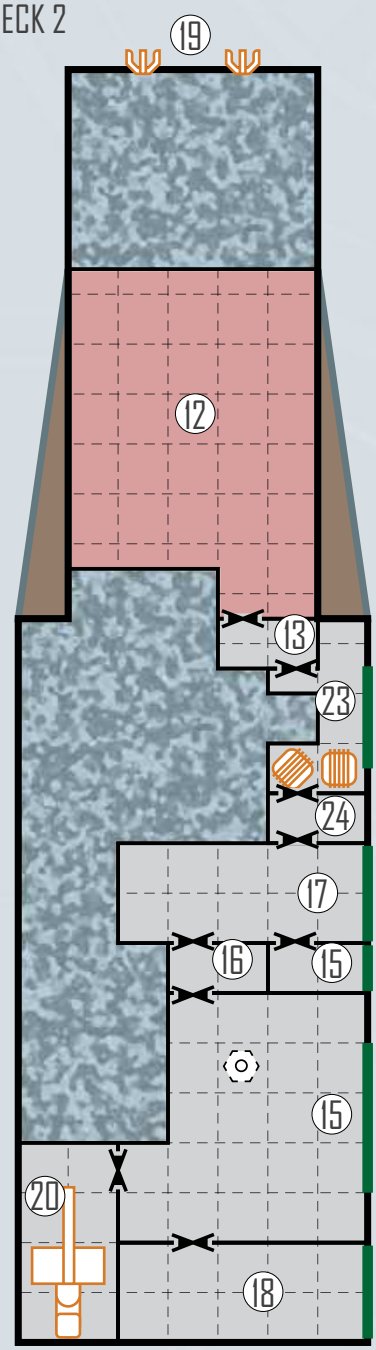
LEGEND

1. Bridge
2. M-drive
3. J-drive
4. Power plant
5. Sensors
6. Mass driver spinal mount & ammunition
7. Large missile bays
8. Medium mass driver bays
9. Medium particle beam bays
10. Triple turrets
11. Missile storage
12. Medium mass driver bay
13. Meson screens
14. Nuclear dampers
15. Docking spaces
16. Full hangars
17. Launch tubes
18. Recovery decks
19. Heavy grappling arms
20. Tow cable
21. Accommodation
22. Common areas
23. Cargo
24. Fuel Processor
25. Armouries, briefing room, medical bays & workshops

1 square = 100 Tons

STYX-CLASS ORBITAL BOMBARDMENT CRUISER





DECK 1 FUEL ONLY

PLANETSIDE

Once the Travellers devise a way to get from orbit to the surface, they must then figure out what to do next. Going to the downport is off the table. Because of the crisis, the downport and planetside naval base are on lockdown and have been secured. Any approach will be deemed a threat, which could activate defensive weaponry systems. It would be a shame for the Travellers to make it all the way down to Depot Prime only to be incinerated by a particle accelerator weapon. Fortunately, they have Admiral Oliar on their side, whose in-depth knowledge of naval protocol inspires him to advise against an approach to the base.

In addition, Dr. Pruta will be eager to help them solve the mystery of the alien emanations, as will their attendant avatar, sent by Naalir. The source of the alien emanations is uncertain but one thing they *do* know is that they are not coming from anywhere near the starport.

Without access to the downport, the Travellers must decide on another location. First, they might want to determine what their goals are. If they intend to find the Ancients site, they will need to go undersea… *deep* undersea. For that, they will need a submersible but let us not get ahead of ourselves. First they must find 'solid' ground on a world with very little of that to go around.

There are several places they can go, some of which they might learn from the friends they made during Holding Pattern. Unfortunately, not all put the Travellers within range of the source of the emanations. However, just getting to the surface is a step in the right direction. The following sections provide some options.

PILGRIM FLOTILLA

If anyone thought that the Uugniians' *starships* were bad, they should see the oceangoing flotilla of maritime ships they use as their base of operations. Over the centuries, they have assembled a collection of low- to mid-tech barges, cargo ships and hulks whose seaworthiness is highly suspect. These vessels falter and sink from time-to-time, causing the untimely deaths of dozens of pilgrims but such is the existence of a devout pilgrim on Depot Prime.

OBSERVATION PLATFORM 9

At some point in their interactions, Ensign Ford will come clean with the Travellers. His mission on Shiirand was a secret one, assigned to him by Imperial Naval Intelligence (INI). He has indeed been threatened with a court martial for directly disobeying orders in that system but he did so under the guidance of the INI. His target was not a pirate but a noble dissident who had threatened to foment insurrection. Ford was promised immunity for his actions but there is always the risk of being disavowed. His INI handler informed him of an aquatic safehouse far in the northern hemisphere of Depot Prime. It was intended to be the place where he and his crew would hide out until the INI could confirm their mission with Naval Command and clear them of any wrongdoing. Given the current circumstances, he and his crew are less sanguine about going to the surface at all but there are useful supplies at the safehouse, and he would like to obtain them before escaping Depot and striking out to another system where he can lie low until the controversy blows over and he has a fairer chance in a court martial.

The safehouse, located at the innocuously named 'Observation Platform 9', has weapons, armour, rations, fuel for their ship, vehicles (select two aquatic and one land-going vehicle from the *Vehicle Handbook*) and 10–15 other items selected from the Computers and Software, Gadgets and Essentials, and Survival Gear sections of the *Central Supply Catalogue*.

THE DIG SITES

Dr. Pruta has participated in the exploration of several archaeological digs but none of them have resulted in new finds. Most of her work has been involved with the study of extant Ancients sites and those of several other extinct species. However, the presence of Naalir and its communication with the emanations might be the break she has been looking for – the chance to discover an all-new site.

The 'dig site' of Depot Prime is not shown on the map but is within 500 kilometres of the emanation. The Imperial Research Directorate has come close to discovering the source of the emanations in the past but now is their chance to make a major breakthrough. Unfortunately, most of the archaeologists and historians that were present will have been evacuated from the planet when the Travellers – and presumably Dr. Pruta – explore the area. Luckily, she does have help. If the Travellers communicated with the captain and crew of the *Valued Friend*, they found that Dr. Pruta's graduate student cadre was present on the ship. That's four able-bodied archaeological students who can help with the project.

ARTEMSUS I

THE YACHT

The Admiralty maintains a luxurious mega-yacht, the *Artemsus I*, for the use of its highest-ranking officers. If there are ex-navy officers among the Travellers, or if they petition Admiral Oliar for assistance, they might be able to get access to the yacht. It has an air/raft landing pad and 12 staterooms. Because of the current crisis, the yacht has been docked and its crew evacuated to the highport. Its location can be just about anywhere on the planet where there are docking facilities, at the Referee's discretion. Keep in mind that the yacht requires four able-bodied crew with the Seafarer skill to operate it. Also note that Naalir can alter the programming of its avatars to include the skill.

TL	12
SKILL	Seafarer (ocean ships)
AGILITY	-3
SPEED (CRUISE)	High (Medium)
RANGE (CRUISE)	100 Years
CREW	4
PASSENGERS	—
CARGO	4.25 tons
HULL	960
SHIPPING	120 tons
COST	MCr19.37

EQUIPMENT	
Autopilot (skill level)	3
Communications (range)	10,000km
Navigation (Navigation DM)	+2
Sensors (Electronics (sensors) DM)	+2
Camouflage (Recon DM)	-4
Stealth (Electronics (sensors) DM)	-2

ARTEMSUS I

The *Artemsus I* is a luxury yacht that is normally used by members of the Admiralty when they visit Depot. Because of the crisis, the yacht is currently docked and its assigned crew is not present.

EQUIPMENT AND WEAPONS

Actuation System, Anti-Missile System (laser), Autopilot (advanced), Camouflage (advanced), Communications Systems (advanced, encrypted, satellite uplink, tightbeam), Computer/1, Control System (advanced), Entertainment System, Fire Extinguishers, Fixed Mount (torpedo, front), Full Galley (10 people), Fusion Plant (advanced), Hot Tub, Hydrofoil, Large Freshers x2, Navigation System (improved), Operating Theatre (basic), Pintle Mount (heavy machinegun, rear, shield), Refrigerator, Sensor Systems (improved, increased fidelity, 50km, sensor mast, underwater sensors), Small Turret (vrf gauss gun, pop-up mount),Staterooms x12, Stealth (improved), Wet Bar

ARMOUR

FRONT	18	REAR	12	SIDES	13

WEAPON	RANGE	DAMAGE	MAGAZINE	TRAITS	FIRE CONTROL
Heavy Machinegun	1	4D	100	Auto 4	+4
Torpedo	50	5DD	1	AP 50, Smart	—
VRF Gauss Gun	0.75	4D	400	AP 5, Auto 8	—

ARTEMIS

SMUGGLER'S COVE

The Imperial Navy has hundreds of contracts with defence corporations, most of which ship their goods directly to the highport or the naval yards on the planet. The navy likes to keep some of their procurement activities confidential. 'Smuggler's Cove' is used as a secret site for the reception of goods that the navy does not want tracked by civilian contractors or its own mid-level officer corps. Only select members of the Admiralty have clearance to know about the advanced weapons and materiel being sent there. A skeleton crew of naval personnel will be present but the marine guard and base officials have been called away to deal with the crisis. The Travellers might be able to use this site as a hideout, provided they can disguise or conceal their presence from the remaining staff.

Smuggler's Cove looks like a mid-tech petrochemical-extraction facility, raised on struts that extend a few hundred metres to a seamount below. It has three levels and a surprisingly low level of security given its clandestine purpose.

Captain Dantu of the *Valued Friend* has been issued clearance to deliver freight to this site before. Her clearance has expired but she might be able to gain access to the site with the Travellers' help. Suitable Deception or Persuade checks will be required.

THE OCEAN DEPTHS

Presuming that the Travellers get to the surface of Depot Prime, their main objective should be to find and explore the purported Ancients site and the source of the emanations. Dr. Pruta and Naalir (in the form of Captain Eilerfaust or possibly one of its other avatars, if desired) are eager to get there, so if the Travellers delay the voyage for any reason, the two of them pressure the group to get to the ruins.

Discovery of this site has eluded explorers for centuries but this expedition has something that the others did not: Naalir. The avatar has become a divining rod of sorts, a sensory device that guides them to the exact location of the site. This might cause confusion for Dr. Pruta, who has her own ideas about where the ruins are, based on years of studying the signals that emanate from the deep.

Presumably, Dr. Pruta has no idea about the true nature of Naalir or its avatars, so the Travellers might be caught in a tough position. They can try to deceive the dour archaeologist but she is a keen observer of human behaviour. She will be curious why they do not defer to her expertise when she is a renowned expert. Pruta believes that the site can be found in Quadrant 7, the triangular portion of the map just to the southeast of the Pilgrim flotilla. However, Naalir says that the emanations are happening close to the flotilla. Pruta is thousands of kilometres off the mark.

Normally, Naalir would be patient, amenable to deceiving Dr. Pruta and her cadre of grad students but circumstances here are different. Naalir's programming is driving it toward the emanations, making the CI obsessive about getting there as soon as possible. Unless the Travellers intend to divulge the truth about their consciously intelligent benefactor, they will have to find a way to keep Dr. Pruta in the loop, suppressing Naalir's obsessive behaviour as best they can and still somehow get to the site.

The Travellers begin their expedition at one of several places. Getting to the site might require a long voyage and they will have to find transportation to the site. Several options are presented in Planetside on page 162.

GETTING THERE

Reaching the source of the signal is no easy feat. Depot Prime is a large world and while it is an important one, it is barely inhabited. Huge swathes of its oceans are rarely explored. While it has been theorised that Depot Prime was terraformed by the Ancients, no permanent structures have ever been found.

Ancients technology is mysterious but still subject to the same laws of physics as that of any other species. Massive industrial structures would have been necessary to terraform the planet. The Ancients may have brought equipment to Uugnii, terraformed the world and then removed the structures, but the effort involved would have been enormous. Most Ancients sites include tell-tale signs of their passing – artefacts and structures that have been left behind. Depot Prime is unusual in that it has obviously been altered with high technology but there is only circumstantial evidence.

The selection of the world as a depot was a strange one, motivated perhaps by the notion that it has seemingly been transformed from a large, lifeless, tidally locked rock into a veritable paradise. Its benefactors moved it closer to its red dwarf star, endowed it with water and an atmosphere, gave it a spin and a magnetic field, and then abandoned it. No one knows why this world

DEPOT PRIME

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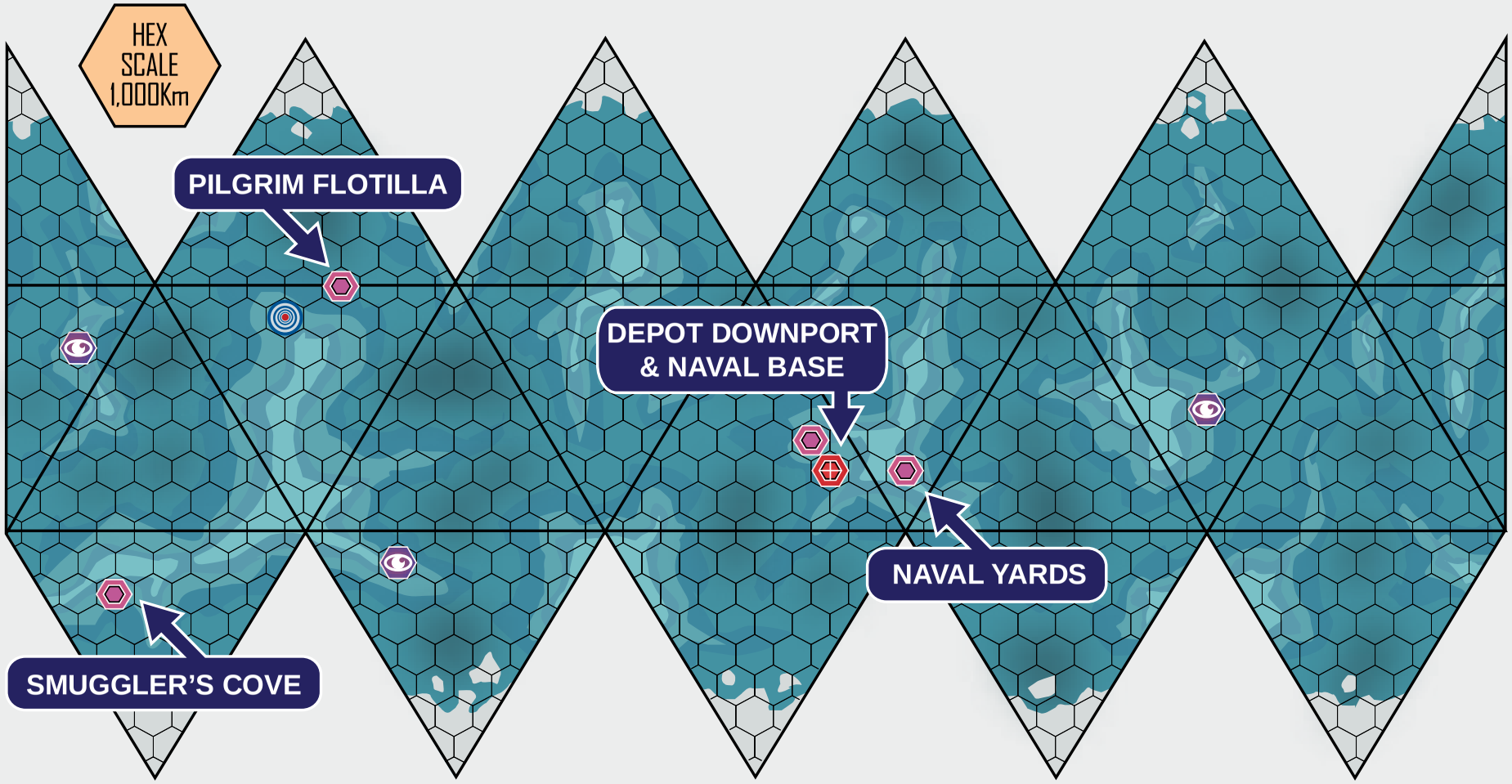


Settlements Downport Observation Platform The Emanation

Encounters

1D	Encounter
1	Choppy seas. Have each Traveller make an Average (8+) END check to withstand the discomfort. Failure results in seasickness, causing a temporary reduction of all physical characteristics by D3, lasting for 1D hours. Travellers with the Seafarer or Survival skills do not have to make this check and appropriate medication can mitigate these effects.
2	Aggressive wildlife. Depot Prime is seeded with a broad range of animal life. The Travellers' craft is attacked by either a large school of fish or a single large predator. The fish are attracted to the synthetic material of their watercraft and the large predator thinks it might be some sort of food. Neither can seriously damage the craft but it makes for a harrowing encounter.
3	Sargasso seas. Since the Travellers are not using a sail-drive craft, this does not adversely affect them but it is strange to traverse this placid, windless region. The heat and humidity are high here as well, making it uncomfortable.
4	Nomadic Uugniian fisherman. With only 400,000 inhabitants, Depot Prime is a vast oceanic desert, mostly devoid of sophont life. However, the Uugniians claim the world as their birthright and some stay to wander its surface after making their pilgrimage. The fishermen speak Vilani and thickly accented Galanglic. They inform the Travellers that the emanations are reaching a fever pitch. Some of their shamans believe it is an omen, although they dispute its portents.
5	Imperial Navy maritime patrol. The navy patrols the planet with high-speed hydrofoils. The Travellers are stopped by a patrol, which sends a four-person boarding party to perform an inspection of their craft. If anything is untoward, they are arrested and taken to the downport and naval base along with their boat.
6	Rogue wave. With no land masses to speak of, rogue waves often appear in the open ocean on Depot Prime. If caught by one, most small watercraft will be destroyed. Large, fast watercraft such as the *Artemsus I*, have the sensors to predict an oncoming rogue wave and the speed to escape it. Give the Travellers the chance to escape this danger but encounters with rogue waves are terrifying reminders of the power of nature.

was transformed into what it is now. It is an enigma. Assigning Uugnii to the Imperial Navy and making it into a depot was as much about denying it to the everyone else as it was gifting it to the navy.

Use the Depot world map to determine the Travellers' distance from the emanations. Naalir's avatar knows the general direction to their source and can navigate them there. If they start at Observation Platform 9, they may use one of the transportation options present. Commander Ford will allow them to take one – but not both – of the two maritime vehicles. If they somehow manage to obtain the services of the *Artemsus I*, then travel to the site will be relatively easy. If they came to the surface of the planet with the Uugniian pilgrims, then they are already within striking range of the emanations. Shaman Uzaashma might even grant them access to one or more of the pilgrims' boats to travel to the site but the Travellers might (should!) be wary of their seaworthiness.

Should maritime travel be required, determine the speed of travel using the vehicle rules on page 136 of the *Traveller Core Rulebook*. Roll one random encounter per day during travel.

KEY ENCOUNTER

Scientific research teams are sometimes granted access to Depot under strict regulations. A research expedition from Kiir, in distant Dunea, was present on Depot Prime before the crisis started. Dr. Oan Tzizii and her team of three associate professors have been on a tour of water worlds in the sector, creating a baseline for scientific comparisons. Unfortunately, they arrived a few weeks before the emanations began and are now stuck on the planet since no traffic is being allowed offworld. However, they have brought something very useful with them – their research vehicle, a Trencher-class deep-sea submersible.

TRENCHER-CLASS ABYSSAL DEPTHS SUBMARINE

The Trencher is a purpose-built deep-sea, supercavitating supersub, with an amazing crush depth of 36,000 metres. The vessel is armoured to protect it from attacks by large sea creatures and to enable it to navigate deep-sea canyons without fear of incurring breaches.

TL	15
SKILL	Seafarer (submarine)
AGILITY	-1
SPEED (CRUISE)	Subsonic (Very Fast)
RANGE (CRUISE)	100 Years
CREW	1
PASSENGERS	—
CARGO	6 tons
HULL	240
SHIPPING	40 tons
COST	MCr47.78

EQUIPMENT

Actuation System, Airlock, Autodoc (basic), Autopilot (advanced), Bunks x16, Communications Systems (advanced, meson com-municator, satellite uplink, tightbeam), Computer/4, Control Sys-tem (advanced), Entertainment System, Fire Extinguishers, Fresh-ers x2, Full Galley (10 people), Fusion Plant (advanced), Increased Dive x2, Navigation System (advanced), Sensor Systems (ad-vanced, increased fidelity, underwater sensors), Staterooms x2, Supercavitating Drive (standard)

ARMOUR

FRONT	12	REAR	12	SIDES	12

EQUIPMENT	
Autopilot (skill level)	3
Communications (range)	1,000km
Navigation (Navigation DM)	+4
Sensors (Electronics (sensors) DM)	+3
Camouflage (Recon DM)	—
Stealth (Electronics (sensors) DM)	—

Getting access to it will require some effort. The team is currently researching a site in the southern polar region. They have completed their research and are now visiting various oddities and points of interest. Should the Travellers become aware of them, they might be able to acquire their services. There are a few ways to do this.

First, initial contact must be made. If the Travellers are monitoring the radio or making a concerted effort to find out what is happening on Depot Prime, they will eventually hear chatter from the research team on one of the public frequencies. If any of the Travellers has the Science (planetology) skill, they might be able to engage the Kiirian team in 'shop talk' and get them to come to the site of the emanations. While the Kiirians are not archaeologists, the chance to discover a bona fide Ancients site is one they will not pass up.

The Trencher is far away but its supercavitating drive gives it the ability to travel at speeds of up to 1,200 kilometres per hour (about one hex per hour on the world map). If the Travellers can convince them to come, they are only hours away from just about any point in the world.

OTHER OPTIONS

The Trencher is not the only supercavitating deep-sea submarine on the planet. The Imperial Navy maintains several that are used to patrol the ocean depths, service their deep-site meson guns and transport crew from one underwater site to another. However, obtaining access to any of these submarines would be an adventure unto itself. The vehicles are well-protected by squads of Imperial Marines guarding the docking bays in which they are stored. Breaking in and taking one of these submarines is not out of the question but the risks are high.

The navy's submarines will be much like that of the Trencher, but have less space for passengers, and are armed with torpedoes and an outboard weapon, such as a VRF Gauss gun or similar. Should the Travellers explore their options when it comes to obtaining a suitable vehicle, and they determine that the navy is their best source, they might find out about these armed submarines but it will be difficult to obtain one. From there, reaching out to various contacts can lead them to the fact that the research team from Kiir has a more easily obtainable Trencher.

QUARANTINED

Three squadrons of Imperial Quarantine Agency warships arrive in system simultaneously with the Travellers. They have come to determine the severity of the situation and consider whether Depot Prime must be quarantined and possibly orbitally bombarded to prevent the spread of any pathogen, mind control or dangerous alien technology. Normally, the interdiction of a world is all that is necessary but the Imperium has 'glassed' worlds before and while Depot Prime warrants special consideration, the Quarantine Agency wields a great deal of power and will use it if deemed necessary for the security of the empire.

The squadrons are led by Admiral Tevonti Peque, a maverick in an organisation that reveres predictability and stability. The navy does not typically appoint their most trigger-happy officers to the IQA, yet that is just what has happened with Peque. She was not always this way but her experiences after being transferred from the Imperial Navy to the IQA changed her in ways that defied her training. Peque believes that the Imperium is on the precipice of destruction and that only the vigilance of the Quarantine officer corps can save the empire from future threats.

Her three identical squadrons each consist of four Arakoine-class strike cruisers and four Styx-class orbital bombardment cruisers. Upon arrival, Peque commandeers two system defence squadrons and various auxiliaries, using them to assemble a makeshift defensive squadron consisting of two Wind-class strike carriers and two Kokirrak-class dreadnoughts. The strike carriers and dreadnoughts are employed in defence of the ships that Peque brought to the system, which have little in the way of defensive capability. Should there be a disagreement in the application of Quarantine doctrine, Peque hopes to have ample deterrent in her fleet to prevent mutiny or outright rebellion.

If the Travellers are still in orbit upon the arrival of Admiral Peque, they had better get planetside quickly, lest they miss their opportunity to determine the source of the emanations before the good admiral does something crazy like bombarding the emanation source from orbit.

THE MADNESS WITHIN

Naalir sends Captain Eilerfaust or another of its avatars to investigate the emanations with the Travellers. Ever since they jumped into system, it has been driven to do so. While Naalir's true 'being' exists only on Celetron and it is building a superior replication in the *Ventura Fortuna* vault, the closest thing it has to a mobile physical structure is its collection of avatars. Normally, an artificial or conscious intelligence can transmit its presence anywhere there is an appropriate receptacle. For Naalir, this is a difficult – possibly even frustrating – enterprise. Its advanced computing abilities far exceed that which are available in Charted Space. It is akin to a 21st Century enterprise computer application attempting to transmit itself through an 19th Century telegraph network. In situations where data access requires an actual physical connection, the best it can do is send one of its avatars, which have programming that can do Naalir's bidding. They cannot contain all of Naalir's consciousness but are specialised to carry out specific functions that only an embodied avatar can and they replicate the CI's personality to some extent.

As they approach the site of the emanations, Naalir's avatar begins to feel an irresistible draw towards the source of the emanations. If the Travellers are not actively trying to acquire transportation to the deep-sea site, Naalir's avatar will attempt to commandeer the most appropriate equipment and vessels available, enter the water near or over the archaeological site and dive towards the desired destination. If the Travellers attempt to obstruct the avatar, it will attempt to fight them to continue on its way, at first using non-lethal combat skills but advancing to violence if the attempt to stop the avatar persists.

Avatar bodies are not designed to withstand ocean depths of 13,000 metres; their ability to endure pressure is little more than that of most air-breathing sophonts, with their only advantage being that they do not actually breathe air. Therefore, the avatar will attempt to obtain deep-sea diving equipment, so it can make the journey. Should it find an appropriate pressure-resistant suit, its journey to the depths can be accomplished with or without a life-support system since it does not need one.

Of course, all of this can be avoided by a compliant group of Travellers who share Naalir's desire to explore the mystery but if they are reluctant, procrastinating or deliberating too long, Naalir's avatar will find a way to get where it wants to go, with or without their help.

THE UUGNIIAN PILGRIMS

Before Depot was Depot, it was Uugnii, a world inhabited by a sizeable population of Vilani natives whose lineage extends back millennia. The Uugniians were displaced centuries ago when the Imperium decided to convert the system into a naval depot but native populations have been returning in recent decades thanks to the softening of Imperial policy.

After recent signs and portents, the Uugniians have been returning in greater numbers, clogging the immigration services at the highport. Many are returned to their home systems but journalistic coverage of these events has made it difficult for the Imperium to evacuate them. There is sympathy for their cause. Keep in mind that the Core was once Ikan sector and it still retains a sizeable population of Vilani-descended citizenry. For the most part, Vilani culture is embedded in Imperial culture and there is little friction between those of pure or nearly pure Vilani blood and the Solomani who came during the Interstellar Wars, the subsequent Rule of Man and the Long Night. Vilani-Solomani polarity still exists but after 2,500 years, the two have more or less converged into a cohesive culture. Nevertheless, Vilani culture and tradition have been present in these parts for eons and the chords of sympathy occasionally sway toward the natives.

Special dispensations have been made for returning native Uugniians, no matter how inconvenient it is to Imperial naval forces who would prefer that they were not present. The navy has presented their case at the Imperial Court that the Uugniians present a security threat but these complaints have fallen on deaf ears as sympathy for the Uugniians has waxed in their favour.

LOCATING THE SITE

There are reasons that the site has never been found, the first of which is that it is not a site at all but a collection of mobile structures that move along the ocean floor. One was created by the Ancients and the other by another species. The structures created by the as-yet-unknown species consist of three lozenge-shaped pillars and an amorphous disc-like structure that undulates beneath them. The disc is made of a thin, semi-translucent material, about 50 metres in diameter. When the disc moves, the three lozenges maintain their relative positions close to its centre, never quite touching its surface. Whether this is a gravitic technology or something more advanced is unknown.

Searchers have come very close to discovering these structures in the past but when they approach, it exhibits another of its characteristics; the ability to change colour and shape to evade detection. Its stealth abilities are far above and beyond those of anything produced by the species of Charted Space and transcend those of the Ancients devices also present in the area. The roving alien site is approximately TL28–30, while the Ancients devices that are searching for it are TL25. In addition, the combined structure has the ability to project its location elsewhere, to a location up to 50 kilometres distant. When its strange energies have been detected in the past, explorers have used TL15 sensors to track down the signal, only to discover that they had found one of its echoes, far removed from the source.

Adding to the complexity of its location is the fact that it has been incorporated into the ecosystem in unusual ways. Keep in mind that these alien structures have been present here, roving the abyssal depths of Uugnii – now Depot Prime – for thousands of years. Like many worlds with deep ocean depths and volcanic activity, life has formed around hot deep-sea vents that provide energy and heat for what would otherwise be a pressurised frozen wasteland. Uugnii hosted life long before the Ancients came here.

The Ancients did things to Uugnii that caused mass extinctions of the planet's life forms on a broad scale. They gave Uugnii a magnetic field, moved it closer to the system's primary star, gave the planet a spin (previously it had been tidally locked, typical of planets that closely orbit their red-dwarf host stars) and vastly enhanced its hydrographic percentage, crashing comets into the planet to add to the oceans that were already present. Most Uugniian life whose habitat was near the surface was wiped out. However, the icy abysses of the world, whose life was largely shielded from the massive changes near the surface, continued to thrive. Some species which were dependent on the death, decay and eventual sinking of life forms in the shallows, died off as well unless mutations or adaptations spared them.

The great depths at which the sites are located is another factor in their ability to evade detection but at TL15, the navy is capable of creating technology and vehicles that can brave ocean depths far beyond those of the deepest parts of Depot Prime's world ocean. The alien structures and the Ancients' devices rove a region that varies from approximately 15,000–20,000 metres deep. A TL15 supercavitating submarine, such as the Trencher, has a crush depth of 36,000 metres, giving

BON APPÉTIT

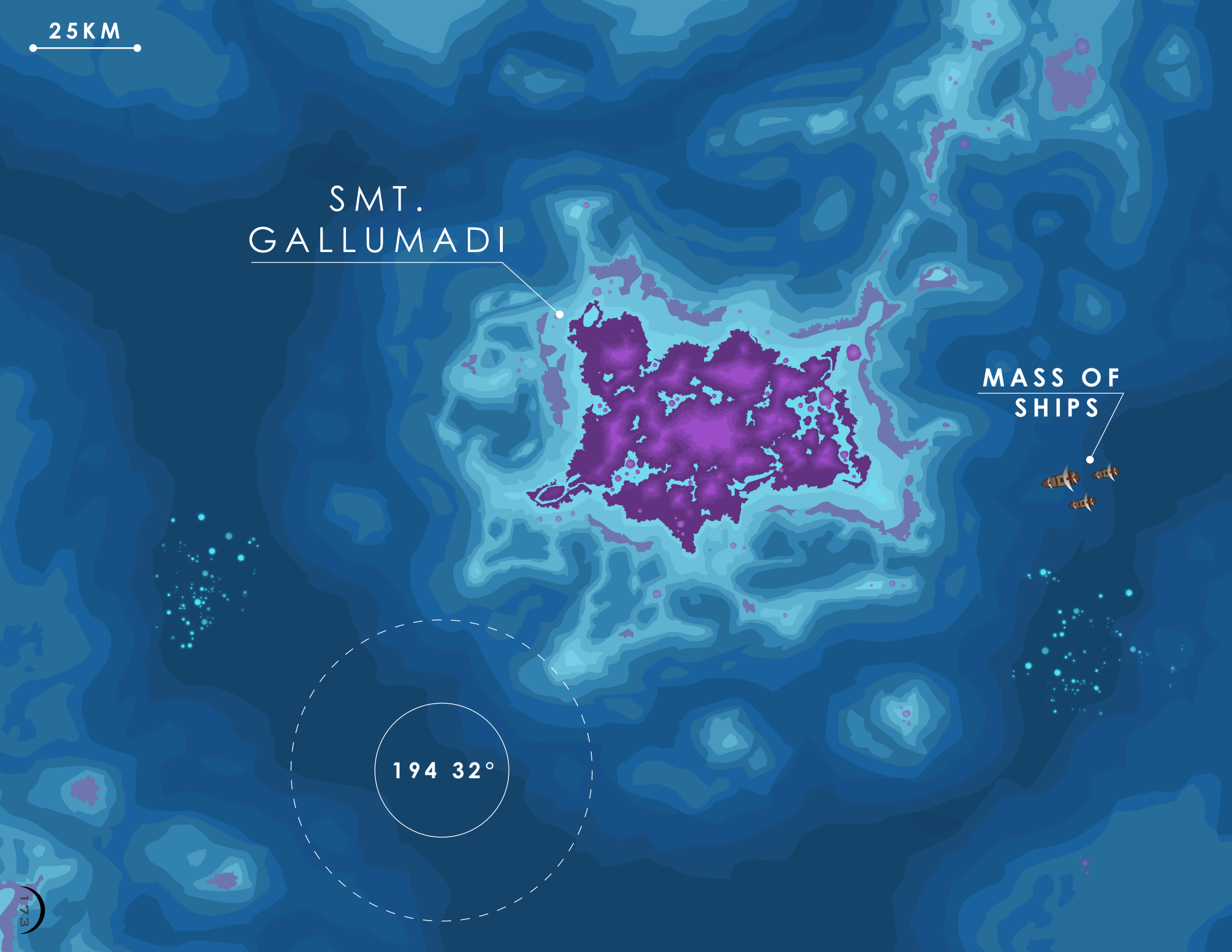
If the Travellers spend time with the Uugniian pilgrims, they are invited to a shugilii-hosted event. The shugilii are their food preparers. Food selection and consumption is important to the Vilani, and it is deeply ensconced in their culture and traditions. The event uses special foods that are selected from the seas of Depot (or Uugnii, as they call it during the ceremony).

In particular, they serve a fish they call *girduurkim* (singular: *girduurker*). The fish are a hardy species that come up from great depths because they are drawn to electromagnetic signals that the pilgrims project. If the Travellers investigate the behaviour of this fish, they discover that their schools migrate back and forth between the depths and wherever the Uugniians summon them. The Uugniians have never bothered to follow them because they do not have submarine technology. An accurate tracing of the movement of the *girduurkim*, coupled with Naalir's attraction to the site, will make finding it considerably easier. Add DM+2 to any subsequent Navigation checks used to find the source of the emanations if the Travellers investigate the migration of the fish.

The morning after the great feast, the Uugniians make their way to the site of their pilgrimage. They travel by TL2 sailing ships to a sacred site marked by two things: coordinates on a map and the presence of seamounts below the surface. The seamounts themselves are just mountains that extend from the seafloor but lifeforms that live upon their peaks are composed of a coral-like species called *nashi* that changes its shape frequently, sometimes over a period of weeks, sometimes in a single day. *Nashi* collectively shape themselves like spears, tubes, arcs and spirals to better attract various aquatic species to them. Some of these peaks reach within a few metres of the ocean service, making for a colourful display just below the surface.

If the Travellers sail with the Uugniians aboard their barques, the travel time to the sacred site is approximately two days, provided there are prevailing winds. Roll one random encounter per day, using the table in The Ocean Depths on page 167. Note that the barques are considerably more vulnerable to rogue waves if that encounter is rolled. The Uugniians are skilled sailors and have an almost innate sense of their world, so they predict storms and rogue waves with a high degree of accuracy. If a rogue wave is encountered, make a Average (8+) Seafarer check (INT) to avoid the wave. Otherwise, the barques are destroyed by the wave and must call for a rescue from the flotilla. Roll 2D for the percentage of pilgrims drowned in the wave, exempting the Travellers.

The sacred spot is called the *Khuk Gallumadi* and the Uugniians mass their ships there and weigh anchor. The Uugniians conduct a number of ceremonies, giving the Travellers the opportunity to investigate the scene. They are close to the source of the emanations and Naalir's avatar is highly sensitive to them. It claims, 'It is here' without additional specifics.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them the ability to risk even greater depths if desired. However, the navy is not invested in going downward; they are much more motivated to go upward and outward, designing starships and space stations, not submarines and deep sea habitations. The exploration of Depot Prime's abyssal depths falls to various universities and the Imperial Research Directorate.

Despite the difficulties faced by previous explorers, the Travellers have an advantage that they did not – Naalir, whose technology is that of the same species. Naalir, whose vault-enclosed housing is a pale imitation of its true form hidden away on Celetron, still retains the same programming and the same advanced software. The copy that it has created for itself might be different in physical structure but the code that runs through its quantum substrates is the same that was given to it by its creators.

Even so, the find is not automatic. The Travellers will have to use every tool at their disposal to locate the structures and get to the bottom of the mystery. Every step of the process requires close collaboration with Naalir – which communicates through its avatar – who can confirm whether or not they are on the right track. To fully investigate the site, they must find a way to travel to the depths of the ocean.

GETTING CLOSE

The first step is *getting close enough to use the sensors properly:* Difficult (10+) Navigation check (1D hours, EDU). This can be the second check in a task chain with the expert driving of the Trencher but only if another Traveller is the helmsperson. Only the Travellers have the rapport with Naalir to make it work.

Note that the Trencher's sensors are not employed in the task yet. That happens in the next phase but the Referee can inform the sensor operator (if the role belongs to a Traveller) that they are indeed assisting with the task by providing information to the navigator.

If the check fails, all is not lost. Unless they suffer a catastrophic failure, they may get to reattempt the check. If the check fails, roll 1D on the Encounters and Events table. If the task is successful, roll 2D instead. In either case, add the Effect of the check.

Travelling by submarine in the abyssal depths of an alien world should be a thrilling yet dangerous experience. Overcoming these challenges should give the Travellers a sense that what they are doing is no easy task.

Encounters and Events

1D/2D	Events
1 or less	The navigator's course takes the Trencher way off target. They are fooled by the structures' ability to project false locations. Add 1D hours to the excursion and then reattempt the Navigation check after they return to the proper area.
2	The Trencher runs aground on the seabed, taking 1D Damage. An Average (8+) Mechanic or Seafarer check (2D minutes, END) gets the submarine off the seafloor and back in action. Reattempt the Navigation check.
3	The Trencher inadvertently wanders into a massive seacave, the mouth of which is so big that they do not realise they are in it until several hundred metres in. Getting out requires a task chain using Electronics (sensors) and Navigation. If successful, they may reattempt the Navigation check to get closer to the emanations.
4	While in the depths, the Trencher encounters a massive school of alien fish. Thousands of them blunder into the sub, doing 1D Damage (being sucked into its supercavitating drives), which reduces the vehicle to half speed unless the Travellers make a successful Average (8+) Mechanic check (2D x 10 minutes, EDU) to repair the damage. Otherwise, they will have to return to port for repairs to get the submarine back to full speed. They may reattempt the Navigation check but if they were unable to repair the damage, the check is made at one difficulty level higher – Very Difficult (12+) – since they are travelling slower.
5	The Trencher is buffeted by a pod of the alien filters described in Target in Sight on page 176. They do not do any actual damage to the submarine but do guide it off course, adding 2D x 10 minutes to the pursuit. Reattempt the Navigation check.
6	The Travellers wander too close to the Ancients machines that are in pursuit of the alien structures. Fortunately, they view interlopers only as a minor inconvenience and simply rebuff them with a gravitic wave, that violently knocks the Trencher off course 1D km and inflicts 1D Damage.
7	The Trencher is on the right track but must reattempt the check to recalibrate its detection of the signal. Remember, the alien structures can spoof their location, making them difficult to track. If this second check is successful, the Travellers are within 2D x 10 km and may proceed to the next phase, Narrowing it Down.
8	Proceed to the next phase. The Trencher is within 2D x 10 km of the alien structures.
9	Proceed to the next phase. The Trencher is within 2D km of the alien structures.
10	Proceed to the next phase. The Trencher is within 1D km of the alien structures.
11	The Navigation check is very accurate. Add DM+2 to the Electronics (sensors) check in the next phase.
12 or more	The Navigation check is spot on. Add DM+4 to the Electronics (sensors) check in the next phase.

NARROWING IT DOWN

Now that they are within closer range of the Trencher's sensors, the sensor operator may make a Difficult (10+) Electronics (sensors) check (2D minutes, INT) to pinpoint the location of the structures and enable the submarine to close within visual range. A single failure simply means the attempt must be reattempted but two consecutive failures returns the Travellers to the events of Getting Close.

The Referee should keep in mind that the phased approach to tracking down the alien structures is intended to convey the difficulty of finding them. Add detail to the descriptions and encouragement if the Travellers struggle and begin to feel frustrated. The point is to have fun but it must also be challenging. After all, no one has found these structures after centuries of searching. It makes sense that the breakthrough should require their best efforts and provide a significant challenge.

TARGET IN SIGHT

The Trencher gets within visual range of the alien structures and may close the gap. However, they also see that the wandering structures have their own ecosystem. Penetrating the veil of lifeforms that surround the structures will be difficult. They have evolved to use the environment as their mobile ecosystem and are very protective of their territory, limited as it is. The emanations and protective features of the structures have attracted a host of life that has adapted to the warmth and otherworldly emissions. Figuring out how it all works could be a doctoral thesis in its own right.

Add to this that sentinels of the Ancients are also present, hunting the alien structures and there is the constant danger that the Travellers could get caught in the middle. Finding the alien structure is just the beginning. Approaching and investigating it heralds a new array of challenges and dangers.

Yuba's tunnelfish was named centuries ago by Lieutenant Mallory Yuba of the Imperial Navy. Yuba took interest in the ecology of Depot Prime and did a great deal of exploration during her assignment to Depot.

The tunnelfish is so named for obvious reasons; its large, tube-like structure allows it to move through the nutrient-rich waters of the deep with ease. If directly in front of the tunnelfish and looking at it head on, one can usually see through its body and out the other side. An array of thousands of finger-like tendrils extend from the fleshy inner portion of the tube, catching small sea creatures and particulate vegetable matter, processing their nutrients and nourishing the animal. The tunnelfish's massive flukes and bilateral tail fins guide it through the water gracefully but make no mistake – this is a powerful animal. If the Travellers get close in the *Trencher*, the territorial tunnelfish will attack their craft, buffeting it with their leathery outer surfaces. If just one tunnelfish gets aggressive, it is a minor nuisance but if several of them do so at once, they might deviate the submarine off its course, possibly even driving it into the silty bottom of the sea.

Tunnelfish compete for the right to follow the alien structures as they rove along the sea floor. The silt stirred up by the structures feeds the animals. Only the biggest and strongest tunnelfish are able to jockey for position near the structures, which enables them to become even bigger and stronger. Typically, a group of four to eight large tunnelfish coalesce around the structures, frightening off smaller, less capable members of their species and any other animals with the Large trait. They ignore or eat smaller creatures.

Animal	**Hits**	**Speed**
Yuba's Tunnelfish	120	10m
Skills	Melee (club) 2, Recon 1, Survival 1	
Attacks	Melee (bludgeon) 2, Flukes (bludgeon) (5D)	
Traits	Armour (+4), Large (+4)	
Behaviour	Omnivore, Filter	

Animal	Hits	Speed
Wanna	2	12m
Skills	None	
Attacks	None*	
Traits	Small (-3)	
Behaviour	Grazer	

Wannas are schooling fish adapted for living in the ocean depths. Schools consist of anywhere from 1,000 to 10,000 specimens, swimming in tight formation, making the mass seem as one cohesive lifeform. Wannas are easily frightened and may be driven off. Tunnelfish accept their presence, since they provide the service of cleaning their outer skins of parasites, wounded tissue and any objects that get stuck in their various crevices. However, large groupings of wannas attract the tunnelfish for feeding. Should the wannas form too large of a school, a mid-sized tunnelfish may feel compelled to absorb it, vacating its spot near the alien site and sometimes leaving a spot open for a different tunnelfish to move in.

Wannas have no actual attack but if caught in their wake when the school is frightened, they can buffet someone about rather violently. They will not inflict damage but can knock a person up to 100 metres should this occur.

HUNTERS OF THE ANCIENTS

The wildlife are not the only things that pose a threat to the Travellers. There are Ancients devices present which have been pursuing the alien structures for thousands of years without success. The hunters may have been eluded by the superior technology of the aliens but they persist to this day, perhaps preserved by the icy cold waters and an impressive design. A group of four hunters wanders the ocean floor, looking for the structures. At the time the Travellers arrive on the scene, they are within striking range but have not been able to break the structures' superior stealth technology.

If the Travellers have brought Dr. Pruta with them – frankly, it would be almost impossible to restrain her from coming – she will recognise the distinct lines and shapes of the hunters as those of the Ancients. It is difficult to make such summary declarations without closer investigation but the excitement of the moment and Pruta's recognition of some of their features makes her bold enough to do so. Pruta will also point out that the alien structures do not exhibit features of the Ancients. They appear to be something entirely different.

If, for some reason, the Travellers have not brought Dr. Pruta with them, they can make these determinations themselves by making a Very Difficult (12+) Science (archaeology) check (EDU).

Figuring out what the alien structures and hunters are doing is another matter. An examination of events may reveal that one group is in pursuit of the other. Have one of the Travellers make a Difficult (10+) Tactics (military) check (2D minutes, INT) to determine that the hunters are chasing the structures but they seem to be having difficulty finding them. They are easily seen by the Travellers because they *want* to be seen by them. Naalir's presence has sent a signal to the structures that has caused them to selectively lower their stealth only to them. They retain stealth to all others except the roving ecosystem that swirls around them, including the tunnelfish and their attendant wannas.

If the Travellers understand that they are dealing with alien technologies of extremely high Tech Level, and that one is pursuing the other, bearing advanced armaments, they might be concerned about the danger and as well they should be. The hunters have two weapons, matter disintegrators and temporal

Robot	Size	Hits	Locomotion	Speed	TL	Cost
Hunter	6	32	Aquatic	8m	20	—
Skills	Athletics (dexterity) 3, Athletics (endurance) 3, Gun Combat (energy) 3, Navigation 3, Recon 3, Seafarer (submarine) 3, Stealth 2					
Attacks	Matter Disintegrator (TL19) (2DD, Zero-G), Temporal Disruptor					
Manipulators	2x (STR 11 DEX 11)					
Endurance	Infinite					
Traits	Armour (+10), Heightened Senses, Invisible, IR/UV Vision, Large (+1), Metamorphic, Seafarer (Medium), Stealth (+4)					
Programming	Conscious, INT 15					
Options	Active Camouflage, Auditory Sensor (broad spectrum), Autopilot (advanced), Bioscanner Sensor, Camouflage: Audible (advanced), Camouflage: Olfactory (advanced), Densitometer Sensor, Metamorphic Robot (advanced), Navigation System (advanced), Neural Activity Sensor, Planetology Sensor Suite, PRIS Sensor, Stealth (advanced), Submersible Environment Protection: 4,000m (superior), Weapon Mount (medium)					

disruptors. The former is a powerful weapon with the ability to destroy just about anything up to a mid-sized vehicle, and the latter is an exotic weapon that produces unusual and disorienting effects.

Hunters have successfully targeted and fired upon the alien structures in the past, doing damage and forcing the structures to rebuild themselves, but superior alien countermeasures have protected them from the Ancients' predations for thousands of years.

The intercession of the Travellers, and the structures' communication with Naalir's avatar, causes them to be put off guard momentarily, allowing the hunters to close in on them and thus, threaten the Travellers as well.

TEMPORAL DISRUPTOR

This weapon fires a globe of energy, causing disorientation and the illusion of time displacement to all beings caught in the sphere of the attack. Depending on the selection made by the hunter, targets will either feel that they have been transported 2D seconds back in time or 2D seconds into the future. This feeling of disorientation does not stun targets but does eliminate their actions for the round the attack was made and the next as well.

The disruptor does not actually transport them through time but creates stasis within the sphere and suppression of all neural activity, making the targets feel as if they have been so transported.

GOING THE EXTRA FATHOM

After they find the alien structures, Naalir communes with them and then returns to full functionality, the Travellers might be satisfied with the outcome and prepare to depart Depot Prime. If they have maintained contact with the ships in orbit – perhaps with their own or with members of the Holding Pattern flotilla who ended up not making the trip down – then they know that there is a crisis brewing in orbit. The Imperial Quarantine Agency is present and they have designs on destroying Depot in order to save the Imperium. Getting offworld might seem like a good idea. However, curious Travellers might want to investigate the Ancients hunters as well.

Approaching the hunters could be dangerous. They are armed with weaponry that is beyond the imagination of any species in Charted Space and seem hell bent on destroying the alien structures. If the Travellers deign to follow the hunters, they will have the opportunity to see what they do and where they go.

The hunters report to a refuelling base of sorts, an automated maintenance facility that is not fully operational after nearly 300,000 years of service, but it does have some interesting features. Among them are a collection of now defunct construction robots that were building an adjacent structure of some sort. Close examination of the partially built structure reveals that it is made out of an unusual material. It has a natural look to it but one that is foreign to Depot Prime. It is the beginning of a seamount of vitreous stone, reminiscent of one that was found at the Iadvada system in the Zhdant sector. This device was known as the *Erdriap Chensh*, Zhodani for 'Controller of Controllers'. Few Imperial citizens know the secrets of the *Erdriap Chensh* but Dr. Pruta is one of them.

Dr. Pruta can provide more information about the *Erdriap Chensh*, which, at the behest of the *Qlomdlabr* – the leader of the Zhodani Consulate – was taken to Qrekrsha where a similar artefact had been found. The devices were activated in -5248, causing a massive catastrophe. The devices transmitted a signal at the speed of light that affected all systems within a 30-parsec radius from Qrekrsha that caused the people there to lose their will to live, starving themselves in short order and blighting a gigantic portion of the Consulate.

The question is: Were the Ancients building another such device in the depths of Depot Prime's oceans? If so, why? Perhaps even more worrisome for the Travellers is wondering what the Quarantine Agency would do if they were to find out that such a thing were here. It might warrant the scrubbing operation that is already underway.

As for the hunters' perception of the Travellers, they do not much care about them. The sophonts of Charted Space are beneath their notice. Their TL15 equipment is child's play to the Ancients and the hunters are not programmed to perceive them as a threat. They consider them barely above the unintelligent fish that also plumb the ocean depths.

SONG OF THE HYDROGENS

Provided the Travellers have brought Naalir's avatar with them, the alien structures make their presence known, lowering their stealth systems and allowing them to approach. They see something that has not been seen by sophont eyes for hundreds of thousands of years.

The undulating circular platform settles on the seabed and the three structures lower themselves onto its surface, pressing the gossamer-like material into the silty earth below. As they approach, Naalir's avatar becomes rigid and begins to experience violent tremors, as if being shot through with electricity. Any attempts to communicate with the avatar are unsuccessful. It has been compromised by the structures, which are examining and communicating with them. While this looks painful to the avatar, it is not; it is an artificial being whose only purpose is to host portions of Naalir's consciousness so it can interact with sophonts. The Travellers might be afraid to touch the avatar given the fact that it looks as if it is being electrocuted, but appearances can be deceiving. It has simply been taken control of by the structures and the energy coursing through it is far more advanced than static electricity. Touching the avatar does not produce any sort of electroshock effect, but anyone brave enough to try does get a strange sensation from the vibrations coursing through it.

A few moments later, the alien structures begin to 'sing', producing first a chorus and then what can only be described as a symphonic conversation. Each of the three structures emanates its own song, each in a different voice, in some unknown alien language. It is pleasingly melodic to the Travellers, but each of them perceives the sounds slightly differently.

Optionally open the collection of sound files that are available at https://xxx.xxx.com and select the first file, 01symphony.mp4. This is the sound of the initial symphony of the structures. The other sound files may be used later. Each of the three 'speaks' during the symphony. They are communicating with Naalir and with each other. Naalir's voice cannot be heard among them. The structures merely perceive its message via transmissions that are extracted from the avatar. If the Travellers record the music, they may analyse it later but even upon this first listening, they have the opportunity to get a sense of what is going on. Make a Difficult (10+) Language (EDU) or Art (instrument) (INT) check to determine the basic gist of the conversation.

The structures are surprised that Naalir has come and jubilant about its arrival. They were made to receive communications from their own kind and this is the first time it has occurred, many thousands of years after they were first appointed to the task. Unfortunately, the excitement does not last for long. The union of the structures with Naalir distracts them from the threat of the Ancients hunters, who come upon the scene intent on destroying the alien interlopers.

WHEN ANCIENTS ATTACK

Fortunately for the Travellers, the hunters are less concerned with them and primarily fixated on the structures. They are hell bent on destroying them, after relentless pursuit for millennia. The persistence of the hunters amazes Dr. Pruta, who cites the fact that most Ancients machinery eventually fails or becomes dormant, with few exceptions. She would like to learn more but approaching the hunters might be ill-advised.

The hunters do not attempt to destroy the Travellers in their submarine, deep-diving suits, or any other conveyance, at least not initially. They see the Travellers as primitives, not worthy of their attention, and therefore overlook them while in pursuit of the structures. They might or might not recognise that the Travellers' presence – or more specifically the presence of Naalir's replicated consciousness in one of its avatars – has finally afforded them the opportunity to take down their prey.

Naalir's reunion with other artificial beings of its kind is a joyful one, if conscious intelligences can be said to experience joy, but the jubilation is quickly dispelled by the arrival of the hunters, which fire their matter disintegrators at the structures. The structures withstand the first few blasts but it is clear they are struggling. Although technologically superior, the Ancients' weapons are strong and threaten to penetrate the structures' defences, making them vulnerable to the attacks.

The disc and structures flee the scene, wending their way around the seamounts and trenches, but it is only a matter of time before the hunters catch up. Naalir beseeches the Travellers to save them. They are an important link to its past and must be preserved. However, it will require some creative thinking and strategy to thwart the hunters.

THE SHADOW WAR

A great battle was fought between the Ancients and a species known as the Hydrogens over many millennia. The war raged far from Charted Space but what the Travellers have discovered here is a remote outpost of that conflict. Despite the small size of the site, its devices wield great power in comparison with the technology of the Imperium.

With the aid of their resident archaeologist, Dr. Visantha Pruta, and given the opportunity to collect samples from the site, Pruta can determine several things. There are actually two archaeological sites present; one with technology corresponding with that of the Ancients, the lost species that left behind remnants on dozens of worlds in Charted Space, and a second adjacent site whose design and technology are clearly distinct from that of the first. Just who this second species is, is a bit of a mystery, one that will take time to resolve.

By studying lithic and organic matter, it can be determined that the majority of material from the second site was imported from another world, one not in this star system. The metallic compounds found in these materials is not commensurate with that of Depot Prime's primary star, which is a red dwarf. The significant presence of iron, titanium and calcium in the materials used indicates that they are from somewhere else, and a higher presence of titanium oxide should be present were the materials native to Depot system. There are several possible candidates for the star of origin but it will require access to a full laboratory to reach a solid conclusion.

Should Dr. Pruta and the Travellers gain access to a laboratory, they can narrow down the origin world of the unknown species to one of several star systems, with Guun, Mukiid and Shauug being the leading candicates, all three of which feature Type-K stars. Nearby Vlaagesh Iirki, Keshi, Shiirand and Gipkikhar can be ruled out since all three have red dwarf companions, which would produce a different result.

The Guunis built an outpost here after travelling to the world at sublight speeds from Guun, five parsecs away. The Guunis, by all standards, are one of the most unique and enigmatic species whose remnants have been discovered in Charted Space.

For the remainder of their story, the Travellers must wait until they embark upon The Lost Civilisation of Guun in Act 2.

The Travellers can help the structures survive but they must control the structures' weapons systems, finding a way to use them against the hunters. They seem to be sonic in nature, each emanating from a different structure. When used, each emanates a sonic attack of a different pitch. Refer to the sound files for this adventure, which feature the following sonic attack effects:

- 01structure1.mp4
- 02structure1.mp4
- 03structure1.mp4
- 01structure2.mp4
- 02structure2.mp4
- 03structure2.mp4
- 01structure3.mp4
- 02structure3.mp4
- 03structure3.mp4

What neither the Travellers nor Naalir understand is that the structures have done their job and need not survive the attack. The artificial intelligences contained within are much more limited in scope than Naalir itself. They achieved their mission by contacting one of their own and have passed along the data they were programmed to give. Naalir has received it but does not yet fully understand what it has been given. Naalir now possesses new information about its past. Deciphering it will be a new challenge for the Travellers to take on.

THE BATTLE FOR DEPOT

The events on the surface of Depot Prime (and below the surface of its oceans) are only a few of the dramas being carried out during this narrative. Tensions are running high in orbit of the planet. The Imperial Quarantine Agency has arrived with a squadron of

planet crackers, led by an admiral with an itchy trigger finger. Admiral Tevonti Peque wants to make a point: No system is immune to the justice that the Agency brings to bear, not even Core Depot, a legendary system through the Imperium and a place where many of the Imperial Navy's most advanced and powerful ships are docked.

By and large, the officers of the Quarantine Agency are selected for their even keels, self-control and skilful adjudication. The Imperium cannot employ just anyone in the role of Quarantine officer. The fate of worlds is in their hands. Peque is considering Sanction Four of the Quarantine Agency Protocols; the interdiction and destruction of a planet, executed for the safety and security of the greater Imperium. Not everyone agrees that this is the correct course of action and a small civil war is brewing between Quarantine and elements of the Imperial Navy in orbit of Depot Prime.

ANATOMY OF A SCRUBBING

Destroying a planet – or 'scrubbing' as it is euphemistically called – requires a fleet of specially appointed ships to do the job.

Peque's mission, as she sees it, is to save the Imperium from a threat that risks becoming an epidemic. When she arrives, the threat is only just emerging. Threats fall into four general classes: actionable, sanctionable, interdictory and at worst, intractable. The threat level is determined upon arrival after a reconnaissance and investigation is carried out. Threat levels can be escalated or de-escalated should conditions change.

Actionable threats are those that can be resolved with diplomacy, technology, financial or other means. Military means are not excluded but generally actionable indicates the absence of the use of force. A surgical strike or commando raid that does not escalate into a broader military conflict might still be considered an action.

Sanctionable threats are those that require a greater degree of coercion, such as blockading a site on a world or even an entire planet. Sanctions may also include the light use of military forces and mid- to long-term economic or political pressure. Direct use of force, such as an attack with ship weapons is beyond the limitations of a sanction. Normally, the Imperial Navy handles the enforcement of sanctions but Quarantine is often called in where there is the potential for escalation.

Interdictory threats are those in which long-term closure of the world or star system is required. The Imperial Navy is usually called upon to execute and enforce interdictions but again, Quarantine may be present when there is the potential for an escalation.

Intractable threats are those which pose a clear and present danger to the Imperium as a whole. For example, the nascent mind-control abilities of the Maruurian native sophonts was deemed an intractable threat that posed a risk to the entire Imperium and perhaps beyond. Intractable threats are dealt with by immediate interdiction of the world and destruction of its inhabitants and structures. This response level scrubs the world of every sign of habitation that it once had, reducing it to an uninhabited rock.

Should Admiral Peque determine that the situation on Depot Prime is intractable and that it must therefore be subjected to a full or partial scrubbing, she will proceed with the following steps.

USE RESOURCES AT HAND

Admiral Peque has come to Depot with only a few orbital-bombardment ships, none of which are siege engines. There are not enough ships in her task force to carry out a protracted orbital bombardment in the relatively short amount of time available. She has been brought on in the role of an advisor with executive powers. For a world as important as Depot, it is deemed unlikely that things could ever escalate to the *intractable* level. However, with the equipment on hand, Peque has what she needs to begin the process. She can begin by making surgical strikes on planetside targets but Depot is an unusual case; the planet is laden with self-defence weaponry for just such an occasion. She must first eliminate those from the equation by ordering their crews to stand down.

COMMANDEER NAVAL FORCES

Deploy system defence boats, torpedo boats, fighters, destroyers and other small fast ships to halt all traffic from the downport to orbit and vice versa, threatening destruction to all ships that defy the order.
Jam communications from the surface to orbit to prevent data from escaping the planet. This requires several fleet elements to be deployed in Bohr Formation, essentially blanketing the world with military-grade signal jamming.

Deploy marines to the highport where they will evacuate personnel who are deemed to be unaffected by the phenomenon on the planet. In a typical scrubbing, Quarantine could also send a cadre of engineers to prepare the highport for 'tipping', which is basically using its manoeuvre drives to send it into the planet as an extra bombardment projectile. However, in this case, the highport is a highly valuable naval asset and will be preserved for future use elsewhere.

POSITION FLEET

All radio traffic must be blocked by military countermeasures, so ships of the Quarantine fleet position themselves at equidistant locations on an outer 'sphere' around the planet, the size of which depends on the planet itself and the range of its communications, and the range of the jamming devices used by the Quarantine fleet. In this case, Quarantine will position their ships as far as possible since the nature of the planetary phenomenon is unknown and involves alien transmissions.

'Acquired' fleet elements might not get the benefit of safe positioning. For example, Quarantine will have commandeered system defence craft and auxiliaries to help enforce the blockade. Because they are more closely associated with Depot, and presumably have working relationships with the unfortunate people planetside, they will become the front line of defence. Any ships that attempt to escape the blockade will be confronted by the SDBs, pickets, corvettes and frigates that Quarantine impresses into service.

New ships are arriving in Depot all of the time, including a range of military ships and civilian ships with supplies. The auxiliaries will also be tasked with communications with any new arrivals, warding them off and directing them to fuel stations on other in-system planets should they require it. Anyone who attempts to approach the planet will be given a stiff warning. Those who do not comply will be boarded or fired upon, depending on the circumstances.

CALLING IN THE BIG GUNS

After the task force commander evaluates the situation and determines that the situation might be 'intractable', she sends an auxiliary to Gipkikhar (Core 1317, B203462-D) to fetch siege engines, massive orbital bombardment ships that use local resources to 'scrub' a planet of all life and civilisation. Sending and retrieving these ships takes a minimum of two weeks.

MONITOR AND PATROL

The gears sometimes turn slowly if Quarantine has not brought everything with them. Smaller worlds can be handled by a task force or small fleet but large worlds like Depot Prime require bigger ships. If more time is required to call in other fleet elements – which is the case on Depot Prime – then the Quarantine fleet has to maintain control of the system until reinforcements arrive. This means appointing select spacecraft to perform reconnaissance and patrol operations within 100 diameters of the target world and sending smaller task forces to other planets in the system as necessary.

This part of an operation can take weeks or months, depending on how long it takes to obtain orders from out of the system and call in the necessary forces to help carry out the mission. It is a dangerous and tense time. Holding a world under the threat of orbital bombardment makes everyone tense and has a psychological effect on both those who have been quarantined and the Quarantine forces themselves.

SIEGE

Once the siege engines arrive, they are deployed to the nearest asteroid belt or other resource location to collect materials for orbital bombardment. Siege engines are immense ships, usually in the multi-hundred-thousand-ton range, and typically come with supporting spacecraft – cruisers, a tanker or two for refuelling purposes and a light carrier for fighter defence.

Siege engines immediately get to work assembling ammunition that will be fired at a target planet and building self-propelled projectiles. Once the order is given, the weapons are fired at a selection of targets. Accuracy is desirable but a typical bombardment involves so many projectiles that target redundancy will occur. Key targets, such as military bases and large cities, will be hit multiple times by an overlapping array of projectiles, ensuring complete destruction. Projectiles of various shapes and sizes are built, depending on what is available in the asteroid belt. Carbonaceous (C-class) asteroids are preferred, since they have the least monetary value but inhabited systems often use these for habitation so the availability of quality projectiles may vary depending on the population.

A bombardment may consist of anywhere between a single projectile or hundreds depending on the number of targets, size of the target world and the ability of those planetside to defend themselves. A Quarantine commander must evaluate each of these factors and design an appropriately sized bombardment programme.

NEUTRALISE CIVIL DEFENCE

To ensure both the elimination of all population and the destruction of all habitations and structures, the attacking fleet must neutralise civil defence capabilities, if present. In the case of a typical world, most civil defence facilities will not have the ability to withstand a concerted bombardment but Depot Prime is not a typical world.

Depot has deep-sea bunkers, habitations and deep-site meson guns that defend the planet. The range of these weapons is Long, so they can hit targets at up to 25,000 kilometres, equivalent to approximately three diameters for Depot Prime. In addition, Depot Prime has hundreds of defence satellites equipped with missiles, torpedoes, lasers, particle weapons and fusion guns. Most or all must be neutralised for a successful orbital bombardment campaign to take place. The weaponry in orbit and under the sea is sufficient to deflect or destroy most incoming projectiles; therefore, it must be eliminated to ensure a successful bombardment.

Quarantine has the codes to force most of these systems to stand down but the Imperial Navy has failsafes to keep their civil defence systems online in the event that an enemy combatant acquires the codes or uses high technology to decrypt and subvert them. While Quarantine can eliminate most of Depot Prime's defences with comms systems, some will remain online to threaten the bombardment effort. To further limit the ability of Depot Prime to defend itself, Quarantine will deploy Imperial Marine commando missions to eliminate known targets. These teams will be orbitally deployed in stealth-equipped drop capsules and their troops evacuated after the missions are complete.

The combined efforts of shipboard electronic warfare technicians and marines deployed on the ground should be able to reduce Depot Prime's civil defences by at least 95%, leaving the planet vulnerable to the bombardment.

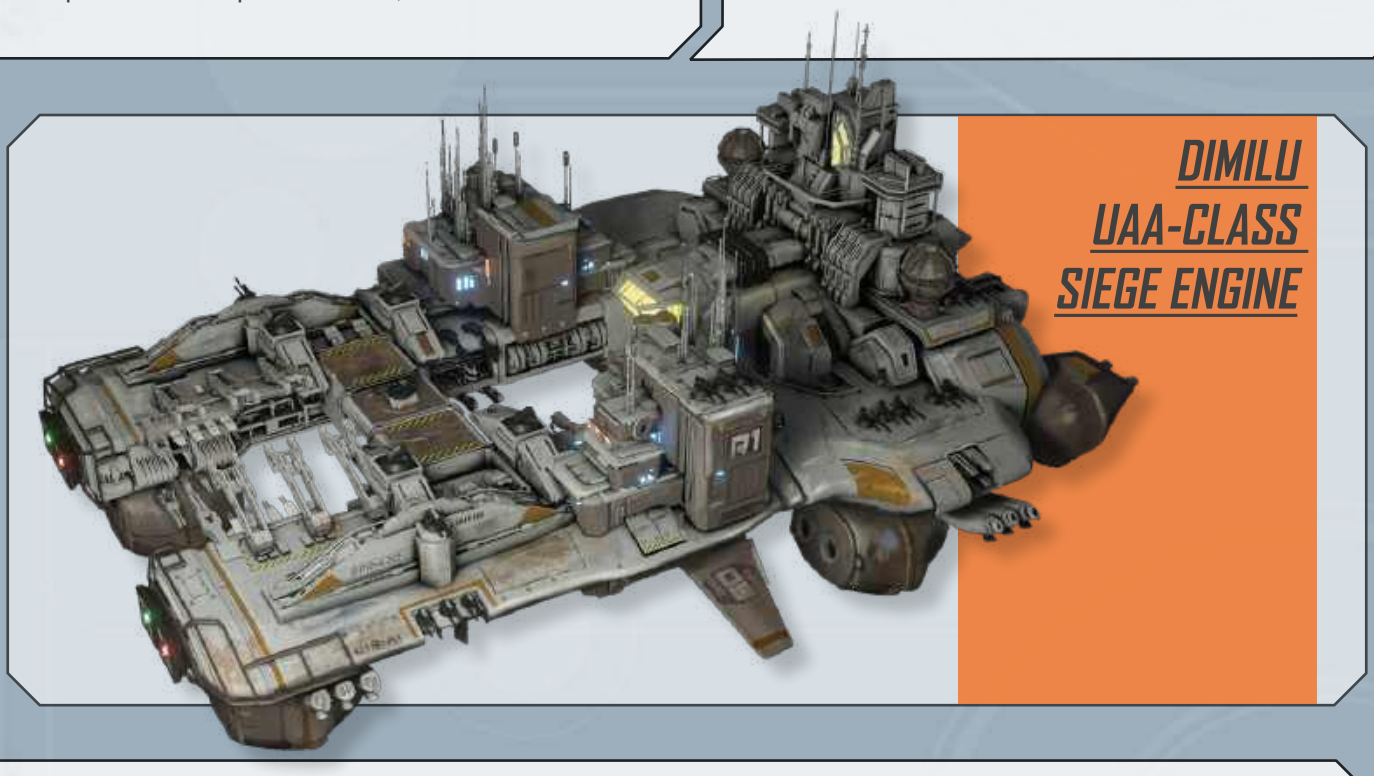
APOCALYPSE NOW

The bombardment campaign is carried out to its completion. All key targets are stricken multiple times with overlapping ground zeros. On a reasonably depopulated world like Depot Prime, it should not require an exorbitant number of projectiles and orbital bombardment weapons to eliminate all targets on the planet. However, the concern is that there is an alien presence there that threatens the greater Imperium, so a complete bombardment campaign will be executed to ensure destruction of the threat. The world's ocean will be boiled and converted to burning steam. Its tallest seamounts will have their peaks decapitated and levelled. The life forms that have been imported to the planet over millennia will be incinerated. The mystery of Depot Prime's 'Ancients site' will be sealed as the world is reduced to primordial volcanism.

Siege engines are a class of battleship that is almost exclusive the province of the Imperial Quarantine Agency. The Dimilu Uaa was actually the name of a previous class of ship, one that served in the Pacification Campaigns in the Domains of Vland and Ilelish over a thousand years ago. The class is reminiscent of the classic Vilani orbital bombardment platforms used during Emperor Artemsus' consolidation of the Third Imperium.

The Dimilu Uaa is an ungainly ship that looks more like a gigantic petrochemical platform than a battleship but it is well-armoured and can defend itself well. It is dependent on support craft, having no ability to scoop or refine fuel. The primary mission of the ship is to park itself in a planetoid belt, mine asteroids and fashion them into projectiles used to 'scrub' worlds. When deployed, the Dimilu Uaa usually has its cargo hold filled with construction materials but what it does not already have, it can build out of natural resources mined from a belt. The ship's manufacturing plant and shipyard are used to build single-purpose manoeuvre drives that are attached to space rocks, equipped with rudimentary robot brains and then sent into a terrestrial target elsewhere in the system. This is referred to as a guidance kit.

A squadron of these ships park themselves in a belt and rapidly put together enough guided projectiles to scrub a nearby world of all life and civilisation, returning it to a primordial and molten state.



ASTEROID PROJECTILE CREATION

Siege engines bring a trove of their own parts and manufacture whatever else they need on site using the resources available. The Asteroid Projectiles table lists the approximate size of an asteroid selected for guidance-kit fitting, the diameter of the rock and the guidance kit construction times for 1G and 2G manoeuvre drives.

Asteroid Projectiles

		Guidance Kit Construction Time	
Size (Tons)	**Approximate Diameter (Metres)**	**1G**	**2G**
2,500	20	5 days	10 days
10,000	30	10 days	20 days
40,000	50	20 days	40 days
130,000	75	40 days	80 days
300,000	100	60 days	120 days

TL15		Tons	Cost (MCr)
Hull	400,000 tons, Dispersed Structure, Reinforced	—	15000
	Capital Turret Modification	4,000	40
	Radiation Shielding	—	10000
Armour	Bonded Superdense, Armour: 10	64,000	32000
M-Drive	Thrust 4	16,000	32000
J-Drive	Jump 3	30,005	45007.5
Power Plant	Fusion (TL15), Power 450,000	22,500	45000
Fuel Tanks	J-3, 12 weeks of operation	126,750	—
Bridge		120	2000
Computer	Core/70	—	80
Sensors	Advanced	5	5.3
	Military Countermeasures Suite	15	28
	Deep Penetration Scanners (20 tons/hour)	1	1
	Enhanced Signal Processing	2	8
	Rapid-Deployment Extended Arrays	10	21.2
	Long-Range Sensor Suite	10	14
	Mineral Detection Suite	1	5
Weapons	Mass Driver Spinal Mount (TL10)	40,000	12000
	Large Mass Driver Bay	50	80
	Medium Missile Bays (size reduction x3) x4	280	120
	Triple Turrets (accurate, high yield, beam lasers) x80	80	260
	Triple Turrets (missile racks) x50	50	162.5
	Triple Turrets (sandcasters) x40	40	70
	Point Defence Battery (type III)	20	10
Ammunition	Missile Storage (15,600 missiles)	1,300	—
	Large Mass Driver Bay (160 rounds)	3,200	—
	Mass Driver Spinal (40 rounds)	2,000	—
	Sandcaster Canister Storage (1,600 canisters)	80	—
Screens	Meson Screens x12	120	20
	Nuclear Dampers x10	100	100
Subcraft	Docking Spaces (50 tons) x6	330	82.5
	Modular Cutters x6	—	71.58
	Docking Spaces (50 tons) x60	3,300	825
	Launch Tube (50 tons)	500	250
	Recovery Deck (50 tons)	500	250
	Heavy Fighters x60	—	4594.2

TL15		Tons	Cost (MCr)
Systems	Heavy Grappling Arms x12	72	36
	Mining Drones x1,000	2,000	200
	Tow Cable	4,000	20
	Manufacturing Plant (advanced, 1,500 tons/day)	37,500	15000
	Mineral Refinery (enhanced, 1,000 tons/day)	500	1000
	Shipyard (2,500 tons)	5,000	2500
	Smelter (1,000 tons/day)	10,000	5000
	Cargo Crane	35	35
	Loading Belts (improved) x100	100	1
Staterooms	High x2	12	1.6
	Standard x3,020	12,080	1510
Software	Manoeuvre	—	—
	Jump Control/3	—	0.3
	Intellect	—	—
	Library	—	—
	Anti-Hijack/1	—	6
	Auto-Repair/1	—	5
	Battle System/1	—	18
	Advanced Fire Control/2	—	15
	Broad Spectrum EW	—	14
	Electronic Warfare/1	—	15
Common Areas		3,023	302.3
Cargo		9,858	—

Crew

Captain, Pilots x3, Astrogator, Engineers x651, General Crew x19,260, Maintenance x264, Gunners x264, Administrators x132, Sensor Operators x53, Modular Cutter Pilots x6, Heavy Fighter Crew x120, Medics x172, Officers x2,075

Hull: 266,666

Power Requirements

Basic Ship Systems
80,000

Manoeuvre Drive
160,000

Jump Drive
120,000

Sensors
23

Weapons
3,205

Screens
585

Launch Tubes
500

Recovery Decks
500

Manufacturing Plant, Advanced
75,000

Mineral Refinery, Enhanced
500

Shipyard
5,000

Smelter
10,000

Running Costs

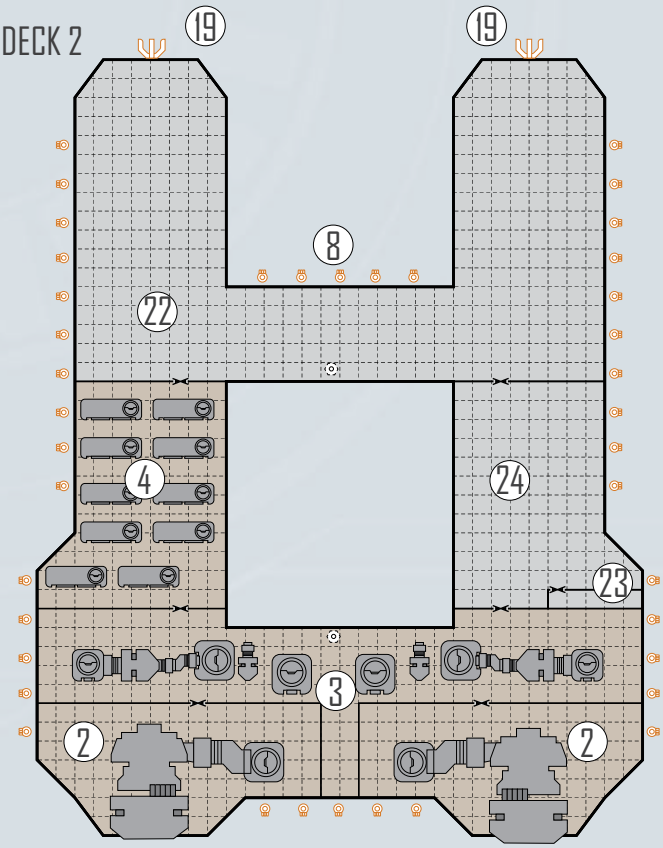
MAINTENANCE COST
MCr18.815431/month

PURCHASE COST
MCr225785.18

DIMILU UAA-CLASS SIEGE ENGINE

1 square = 100 Tons

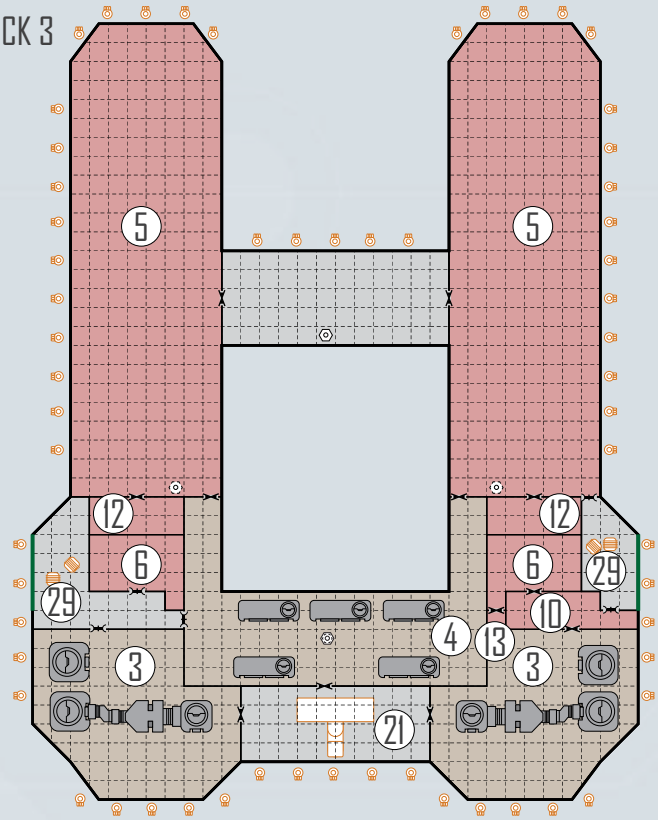
DECK 2



LEGEND

1. Bridge & sensors
2. M-drive
3. J-drive
4. Power plant
5. Mass driver spinal mount
6. Large mass driver bay
7. Medium missile bays
8. Triple turrets
9. Point defence battery
10. Missile storage
11. Large mass driver bay
12. Mass driver spinal ammunition
13. Sandcaster canister storage
14. Meson screens
15. Nuclear dampers
16. Docking spaces
17. Launch tube
18. Recovery deck
19. Heavy grappling arms

DECK 3

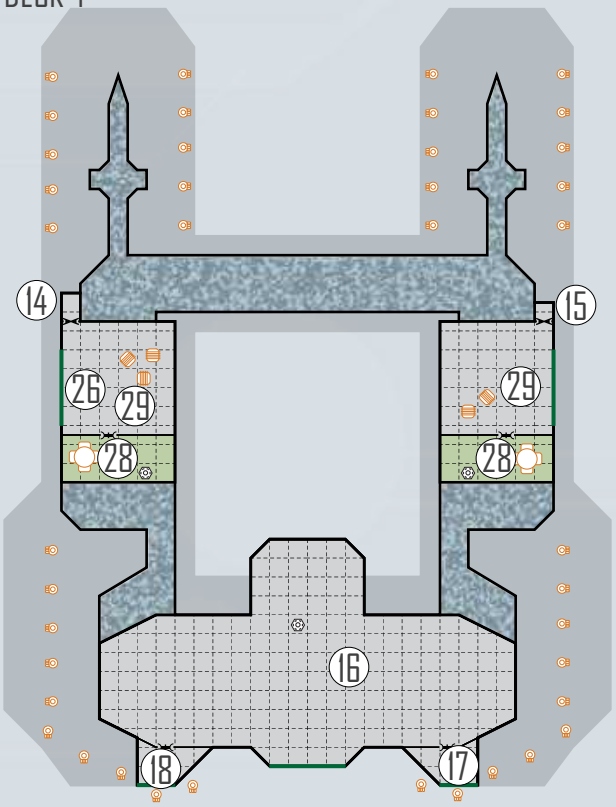


20. Mining drones
21. Tow cable
22. Manufacturing plant
23. Mineral refinery
24. Smelter
25. Shipyard
26. Cargo crane & loading belts
27. Staterooms
28. Common areas
29. Cargo

DECK 1 FUEL ONLY

DIMILU UAA-CLASS SIEGE ENGINE

DECK 4



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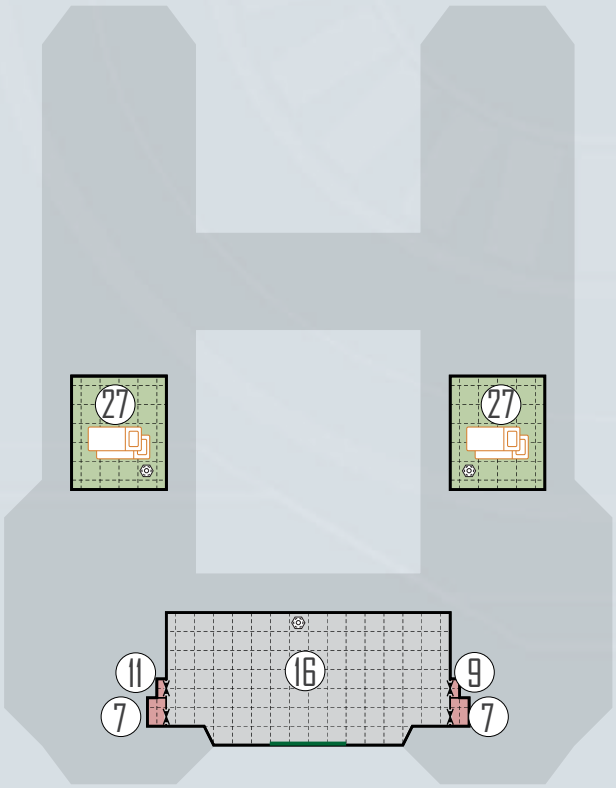

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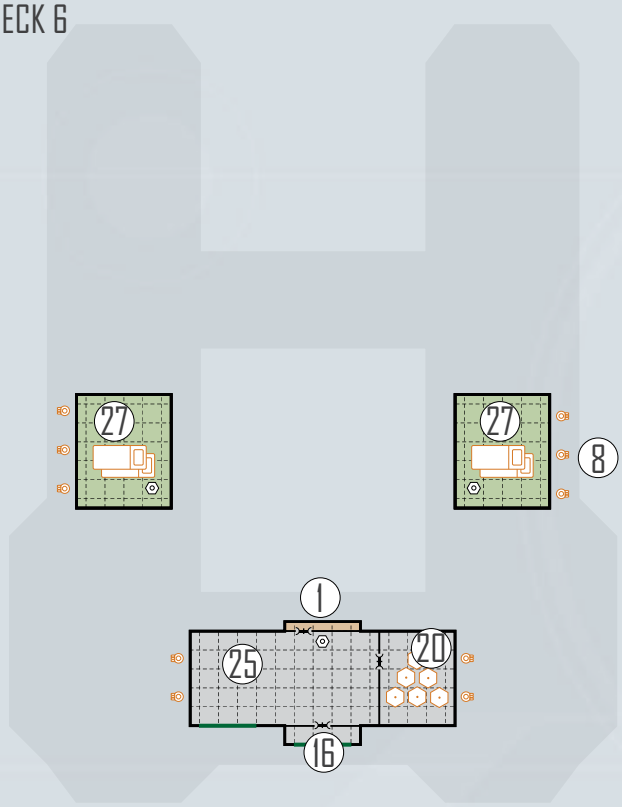


PREVENTING THE SCRUBBING

After escaping Depot Prime, the Travellers have options… if they are not caught in the act. Anything that comes out of the Depot Prime gravity well is deemed a threat. If the Travellers are spotted making their way to their own ship or another, the Imperial Navy will attempt to destroy them. This should not come as a surprise. As they make their escape – however they accomplish it – they may see another ship trying to make its way offworld, only to be destroyed by ODC missiles. However, if they can surreptitiously get back to the *Ventura Fortuna*, they have choices. They can simply wait out the bombardment, watching the fireworks from orbit, or they can do something about it. The Imperial Navy does not want to see their crown jewel – the Depot of the Core – destroyed at the hands of the Quarantine Agency. If the Travellers can prove that the alien structures in the ocean depths are not only harmless but non-psionic, that might be all the evidence needed to call off the bombardment. The only problem is that Quarantine has already sent at least one giant space rock to convert Depot Downport into vapor.

Depending on where the Travellers' timeline meets the timeline of the Imperial Quarantine Agency and its hellbent commanding officer, Admiral Peque, there are a number of things they might do to prevent the planet from being destroyed. See the Timeline on page 148 for the possible durations of each action taken by the Travellers on Depot Prime juxtaposed with the actions of the Quarantine Agency. If Quarantine has already begun to launch guided asteroid projectiles towards the planet, then there is limited time before anything can be done. Some possibilities include…

THE DIPLOMATIC ROUTE

Reaching out to Quarantine is not going to work. Admiral Peque has gone beyond the point of no return. To rescind her orders now would be career suicide. However, if the Travellers can somehow communicate with Imperial Navy ships present in system, they might be able to convince their officers that the 'threat' on Depot Prime is not a threat at all.

It will be difficult to get through using comms since Quarantine's equidistantly placed capital ships are jamming all communications from the planet, but there are ways around this. Tightbeam laser, meson or other similar comms technology might be able to connect them with one of the navy's ships. If they can get through to the right person, possibly even just a lowly junior officer on an orbital defence corvette, they might be able to work their way up the chain to someone whose opinion matters and get them to stop this madness. Of course, that likely means a conflict between naval and Quarantine ships but the navy far outguns them. They just need a viable reason to act.

DECAPITATION

Finding a way to remove Admiral Peque from command will end Quarantine's operation immediately. She has failing support among her own officer staff but none have the will to stop her. This is Quarantine's mission, deciding when it is time to bring the full force of the navy to bear on worlds that pose a threat to the Imperium. The types of officers who mutiny at the first sign of a disagreement do not pass muster on IQA psychology exams. Obedient, efficient and effective officers are selected for the service. Firebrands, mavericks and rebels need not apply.

If the Travellers can find a way to get an assassin on board and eliminate Admiral Peque, the whole operation more than likely breaks down. Peque's subordinate officers will carry out her orders but there is more than a good chance that Peque's second-in-command can be convinced to change their mission and call off the bombardment. Duty or not, this is the destruction of a key Imperial asset and the resultant deaths of thousands of naval personnel is not a burden that most Quarantine officers are going to want to carry for the rest of their lives, especially if the Travellers can prove that the alien technology on the planet poses no existential threat.

CIVIL WAR

Getting the navy to countermand Quarantine and then outright rebel against them will not be easy but the Travellers do have Admiral Dadanda Oliar aboard the *Ventura Fortuna*. If he can be convinced that the Quarantine mission is bogus, he wields a considerable amount of influence in the navy and might be able to stir them to action. In addition, if one or more of the Travellers has a naval background and officer's stripes, they might be able to assist the Admiral.

If they can enlist the navy to their cause, then the two sides could be pitted against each other. This can be resolved using the Fleet Battles rules from *High Guard*, the standard Space Combat rules from the *Traveller Core Rulebook*, or simply beydeciding the outcome and then letting the Travellers play whatever role they choose. While the ships duke it out, the Travellers

could be called upon to exercise derring-do of their own, perhaps using the nimble *Velos tis Alitheia* to perform a key mission in the process. See Stop That Asteroid! for more information about one such mission.

LET IT HAPPEN

Alternatively, they can just let the bombardment happen. After the Travellers and Naalir meet with the alien structures, and Naalir has the opportunity to collect the data that they were made to transmit, then their mission is effectively over and successfully completed.

The next phase of the story will – hopefully – be their successful escape from the planet and departure for safer star systems. The *Ventura Fortuna*, having remained in orbit for the duration, is free to go after the crisis has been resolved. All the Travellers must do is find a way to stealthily escape the gravity well of a planet under siege and sneak their way back to their luxury liner. With Naalir's faculties now fully returned, one way they can do that is by summoning the *Velos tis Alitheia* to rescue them from orbit, its stealth and the chaos of the attack masking its planetfall and subsequent return to orbit. Give the Travellers the chance to come up with this scenario, or at least to ask Naalir what might be done.

STOP THAT ASTEROID!

The first asteroid whose guidance system is built and which is launched at Depot Prime comes at a difficult time for the Travellers. They may be attempting to prevent the destruction of the planet using one of the methods described before (or one of their own) but while they are going through the phases of this narrative, keep in mind that the Quarantine Agency and its determined admiral are going through their own paces, too. They have appointed several Dimilu Uaa-class siege engines to the nearest asteroid belt to start building self-guided projectiles. Just as the Travellers are doing what they can to prevent Quarantine from destroying the world, the first of their projectiles is already on its way, collecting enough delta-v to obliterate anything up to the size of a small city.

Should the Travellers manage to enlist the Imperial Navy against Quarantine, the distraction will afford them the opportunity to stop the first of several projectiles.

ASTEROID PROJECTILE

An automated asteroid projectile is designed with cheap, easy-to-assemble parts and fitted with automation so that no crew are required to guide it towards its target. A small bridge is present to house guidance and sensor systems but no seats or other comforts are provided.

Most of the space allotted to the planetoid is not used; therefore, there is no cargo space. The drones mold the asteroid into a projectile, and the attached equipment sends it on its way toward a target.

TL15		Tons	Cost (MCr)
Hull	12,000 tons, Planetoid	2,400	48
Armour	Armour: 2	—	—
M-Drive	Thrust 2 (increased size)	300	360
Power Plant	Fusion (TL8, increased size), Power 4,500	562.5	168.75
Fuel Tanks	8 weeks of operation	112	—
Bridge	Small Bridge	40	24
Computer	Computer/15	—	2
Automation	Enhanced Automation	—	144.1875
	Ship's Brain Interface	—	48
Sensors	Military Grade	2	4.1
Systems	Mining Drones x100	200	20
Software	Manoeuvre	—	—
	Intellect	—	—
	Virtual Crew/2	—	10

Crew

Special

Hull: 6,000

Power Requirements

Basic Ship Systems
1,920

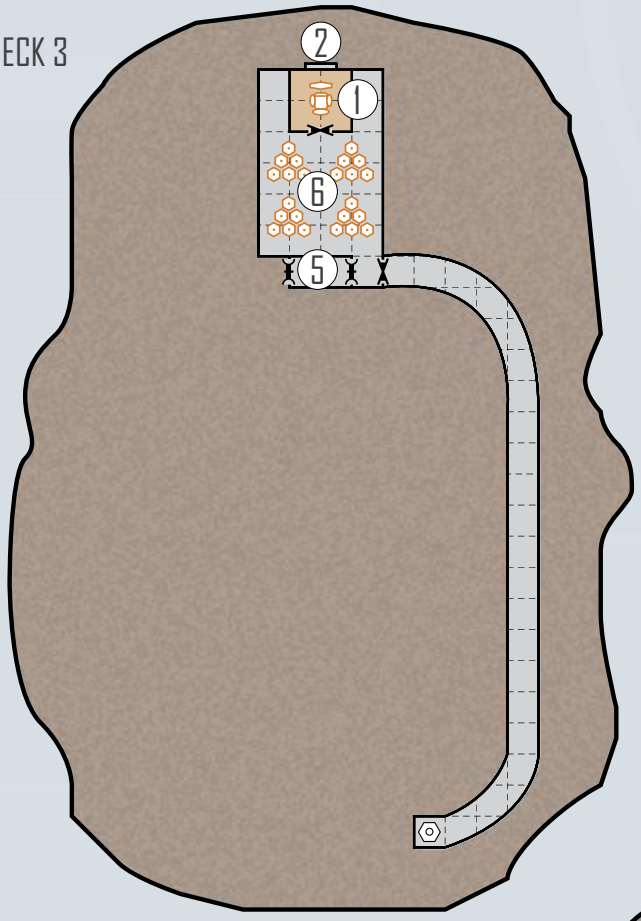
Manoeuvre Drive
2,400

Sensors
2

ASTEROID PROJECTILE

1 square = 10 Tons

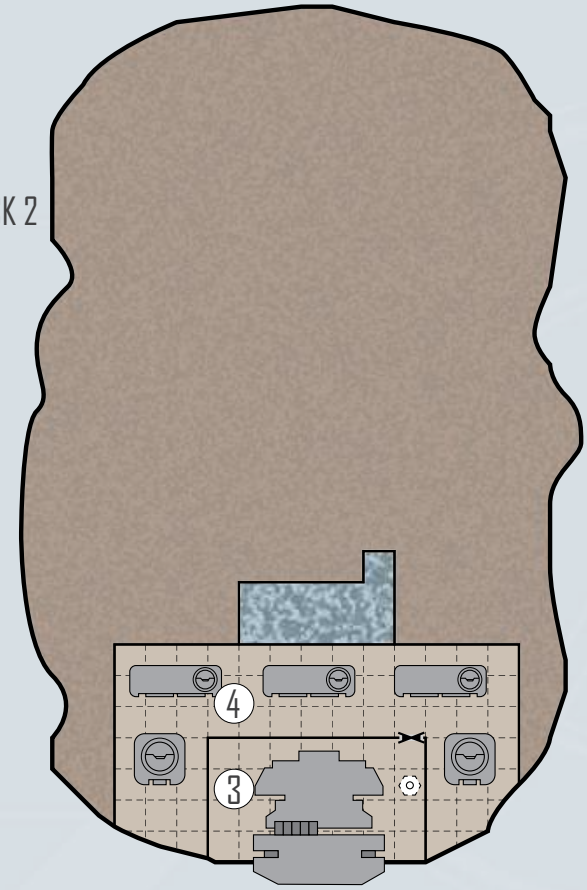
DECK 3



LEGEND

1. Bridge
2. Sensors
3. M-drive
4. Power plant
5. Airlocks
6. Mining drones

DECK 2



DECK 1 ASTEROID ONLY

ALLIES AND OPPOSITION

ADMIRAL DADANDA OLIAR

SPECIES	GENDER	AGE
Human	Male	72

TRAITS			—	SKILLS
STR	6	INT	11	Admin 3, Athletics (endurance) 1, Broker 1, Diplomat 1, Electronics (comms) 1, Flyer (grav) 2, Gunner 0, Gun Combat (energy) 1, Leadership 3, Mechanic 0, Medic 1, Melee (blade) 2, Persuade 3, Pilot 1 (capital ships), Tactics (naval) 2, Vacc Suit 1
DEX	6	EDU	9	
END	5	SOC	11	

WEAPONS	Laser Pistol (3D+3, Zero-G)

After retiring from the Imperial Navy over a decade ago, Admiral Oliar made a name for himself in business, making his way onto the boards of several subsector-wide corporations within the Core. He has the mien of an old navy hand whose steel has been tempered and altered by years in the business world. Where once he was an aggressive war fighter, a veteran of the brief Fourth Frontier War, his years in business have given him a more nuanced approach to problem solving. His skills as a negotiator could be useful to the Travellers but they should take caution: Oliar is always looking out for his own best interests and will ultimately seek deals that satisfy his wants before those of others.

DR. VISANTHA PRUTA

SPECIES	GENDER	AGE
Human	Female	40

TRAITS			—	SKILLS
STR	8	INT	9	Diplomat 0, Drive 0, Electronics (computers) 1, Investigate 2, Language (Oynprith) 3, Medic 0, Science (archaeology) 4, Science (xenobiology) 3, Vacc Suit 0
DEX	7	EDU	13	
END	10	SOC	10	

A brilliant academic, Dr. Pruta is originally from the Old Expanses but made her way to the Core to study the archives at Reference and eventually to Capital, where she served on various advisory councils for the Moot. She has joined the cruise to have a luxurious passage to Depot where she intends to meet with her research team from the University of Brygella, a waterworld in the Cadion subsector.

Note to Referee: Optionally use mixed data from *Mysteries of the Ancients*, *Secret of the Ancients* and *Wrath of the Ancients* to convey the depth of her knowledge. If the Travellers have not experienced any of these campaigns, be sure to keep it vague so they can enjoy them at a later date without spoilers.

Pruta has virtually no sense of humour and should not be trifled with lest one incur the laser-like penetration of her cold and unremitting stare. Despite her prickliness, she is a useful source of information and plays a key role in this adventure.

REAR ADMIRAL TEVONTI J. A. PEQUE

SPECIES	GENDER	AGE
Human	Female	61

TRAITS			—	SKILLS
STR	5	INT	10	Admin 3, Advocate 1, Gun Combat (slug) 1, Gunner 0, Leadership 3, Mechanic 0, Melee (blade) 2, Pilot (capital ships) 2, Tactics (naval) 3, Vacc Suit 0
DEX	7	EDU	12	
END	6	SOC	10	

WEAPONS	Quarantine Agency-issue Snub Pistol (3D-3)
ARMOUR	Navy Working Dress (+1)
AUGMENTS	Wafer Jack (TL13)
EQUIPMENT	Commdot

Rear Admiral Peque really hates that the Quarantine Agency does not get the credit it deserves. As far as she is concerned, the Imperial Navy with their attractive dress blues, cutlasses and seemingly unlimited budget are unfairly held in such high regard when it is the Quarantine Agency – itself a sort of subset of the navy – that truly protects the Imperium from disaster. The navy are aggrandised trade convoy protectors while the QA keeps citizens safe from contagions, alien infestations and conspiracies that might otherwise affect broad swathes of space. It is high time that they get their just due and she means to see it happen even if it means nuking a world or two into glass.

FAVOUR

A potential windfall of Favour is available depending on what the Travellers accomplish in this Departure.

Outcome	Award
The Travellers make first contact with the alien structures.	2 Influencer
The Travellers work with Ensign Millen C. Ford to get to Depot.	1 Political
The Travellers work with Captain Ziznia Dantu to get to Depot.	1 Underworld
The Travellers work with Shaman Uzaashma to get to Depot.	1 Influencer
The Travellers enlist Imperial Navy elements to stop Quarantine from destroying Depot Prime.	2 Political
The Travellers acquire Ancients artefacts or remnants of the alien structures.	1 Wealth

WINDS OF CHANGE

Act 1 offers the Travellers the opportunity to explore the Core and get a sense of what is going on in the Imperium at large. Sometime during the campaign, the Referee allows the revelation to occur; Captain Eilerfaust comes clean about what he really is, who the Travellers' fellow crewmembers are and the nature of their conveyance. This occurs whenever the Referee feels the moment is right, or after the Travellers have begun to deeply investigate the strangeness and eccentricity of their ship and the truth can simply no longer be denied. At some point, the Travellers' patience might wear thin and they will want answers.

Depending on how things play out, the big revelation might occur when Captain Eilerfaust calls the Travellers together to let them in on the big secret, or it might take a more confrontational form. If the Travellers put the major pieces together – the presence in the vault, the wandering nocturnal maintenance robot, the presence of a second ship in the belly of the liner and so on – then they might go marching into Eilerfaust's office to demand answers. Once the Travellers have acquired a critical mass of evidence that things are not what they seem, Naalir takes down the walls of deception and lets them in on its enterprise. For more thoughts on when this might occur, see The Haunted Ship on page 17 and its subsection, The Moment of Truth on page 19.

The revelation event is variable, may occur at any time during the conduct of Act 1 and changes the nature of any Departures that the Referee has not yet run. The Departures are the major adventures of the act and the knowledge that the Travellers have a conscious intelligence serving as their patron, plus access to the tools at its disposal, primarily the *Velos tis Alitheia*, the elite scout ship in the belly of the *Ventura Fortuna*, will change how these adventures are played out.

THE REVERIE

Even after the Travellers discover the true nature of the ship, things continue to happen. While Naalir informs the Travellers about what it is going on in the vault of the *Ventura Fortuna*, it does not tell them that its transformation will take a violent, destructive turn at its conclusion.

After the Referee has completed all of the Departures in Act 1, as well as any desired patron encounters, it is time to begin the transition to Act 2.

The Reverie marks the completion of Naalir's construction project in the vault. It has replicated a reasonable facsimile of the 'egg-and-lattice' structure that constituted its original structure, which is housed on Celetron. Its reconstituted body advances Naalir from a TL16 conscious intelligence to a TL17 one.

Naalir no longer requires the meagre TL16 replication that it has been using thus far, so it copies all of the replication's acquired data, destroys the replication, fries the circuits of the Core/40 computer that housed it and asserts itself as the new Naalir. Its behaviour is much the same but the transformation itself destroys the *Ventura Fortuna*. The *Velos tis Alitheia* can escape this fate but only if the Travellers act quickly. Salvaging the sleek scout ship will not be easy, especially if the Travellers have a ship full of passengers to attend to while the *Ventura Fortuna* crumbles around them.

The Reverie can begin any time the Referee sees fit. It can occur while the ship is in port, on its way to or from jump point or, for maximum suspense, it can begin while the ship is in jumpspace but it must emerge quickly. If the *Ventura Fortuna* were to go through the Reverie entirely while in jumpspace, there would be no survivors, including Naalir itself.

Once the Reverie begins, the wheels of destruction begin to turn and there is no reversing the process. The ship is essentially consumed by the final steps of Naalir's transformation. It is akin to a violent birth of sorts, in which the infant eats its gestation receptacle and then destroys its mother's body.

The Reverie has four phases:

- The quake
- The shattering
- The implosion
- Disintegration

The **quake** is the initial warning that something is happening. The *Ventura Fortuna*'s alarms go off and the ship begins to rumble violently. Loose items fall off shelves, lights go out, floor plates buckle, sensitive systems go offline and anyone walking the halls of the ship must make an Average (8+) DEX check to stay on their feet. The quake lasts for 10+2D rounds. If the Travellers act immediately, they might have time to evacuate most of the passengers. The ship's two craft – the launch and the *Velos* – are not initially affected by the Reverie, so there is time to act but it must be done quickly. The tremors of the quake are staccato, not rhythmic, so the effects are random. Have the Travellers make an additional Average (8+) DEX check every few rounds. The frequency and strength of the tremors should be inconsistent, so change the number of rounds between each tremor randomly (or roll 1D for the interval) and sometimes increase the difficult of the DEX check to Difficult (10+). After the designated number of rounds ends, the quake phase is over and the Reverie advances to the shattering phase.

The **shattering** is the culmination of the events of the quake phase. The tremors that were rumbling through the ship were aligning gravitic forces along specific paths, creating a lattice of fault lines throughout the hull. When the ship advances to the shattering, all those fault lines begin to split at the seams more or less simultaneously, breaking the hull apart within 5+2D rounds. The tremors stop, enabling anyone still aboard to move without making DEX checks but each of the ship's major systems break down in 1D rounds, including life support, power, the manoeuvre drive, the computer, comms, sensors and weaponry. The Reverie preserves the jump drive, storing it in a shield of debris and saving it for an as-yet unknown reason. After life support breaks down, anyone still on the ship is in zero-G, complicating any effort to escape. At the end of the shattering phase, the ship is visibly crumbling on the outside and many of its features begin to become unrecognisable. Anyone still aboard at the conclusion of this phase is in dire trouble and should evacuate immediately before the next.

During the **implosion**, the *Ventura Fortuna's* shattered pieces break into smaller pieces and recede, as if drawn inward by a strong gravitational force. If the Travellers have not evacuated the launch and the *Velos* already, those ships begin to be affected by the Reverie as well, starting with their own quake phase. If the Travellers do not evacuate the two craft within 10+2D rounds, they advance to a shattering phase of their own and will be unrepairable. The implosion is very destructive. The ship has been cut into thousands of hull pieces, all of which are breaking apart and being drawn inward towards its core. Each piece is small, taking up a few litres of space at most, with many much smaller pieces. As they break loose, the pieces are rapidly drawn to the core, reducing the ship to a swirling mass of debris, flying at high speed towards its nominal centre. For the first five rounds of the implosion, anyone still inside takes 4D damage per round, reduced by any armour worn. During rounds 6–10, the damage is increased to 6D per round and after 10 rounds, the damage is increased to a whopping 8D per round. Oddly enough, the ship's fuel is kept intact in rumbling, undulating structures created by the Reverie. The event is putting the liquid hydrogen to some use but it is unclear just what that is during this phase. At the conclusion of the implosion, the ship's form factor has been reduced to a swirling ball of rubble. The gravitic forces which have wreaked its destruction thus far cease and the ship begins to disintegrate.

The **disintegration** phase, which takes only 1D+4 rounds, is marked by the activation of the ship's fuel by the still-intact jump drive. Previously, the fuel was sloshing around in amorphous blobs of hull material but it is now put to use to suck the entire ball of rubble into jumpspace. Any Travellers or characters who have somehow remained within the sphere of the *Ventura Fortuna* are now instantly killed as they too are thrust through the jump aperture into jumpspace, unfortunately without the protection of a ship's hull. This event is accompanied by wild pyrotechnics which then fade, leaving only Naalir's new egg-and-lattice structure intact.

Regardless of the Travellers' valiant efforts, there are unavoidable fatalities caused by the Reverie: Captain Eilerfaust and all the android crew. Naalir makes no effort to save its avatars and simply lets them be destroyed where they stand. They refuse assistance of any kind, actively maintaining their positions wherever they are found within the ship when the event begins.

The avatars do not resist rescue by the Travellers, nor do they help in anyway. They basically become inert statues, stripped of their former personalities and mannerisms. Even if the Travellers drag the avatars out of the ship, Naalir will never again operate them, leaving them as defunct, albeit highly advanced, artificial beings. By this point in the campaign, the Travellers might have made attachments to one or more members of the crew as each had distinct personalities, especially Eilerfaust. Losing them to an apparent 'death' might be traumatic. However, Naalir sees them only as parts of itself, extensions of its personality that have served their purpose and which may now be sacrificed.

The destruction of the *Ventura Fortuna* is unexpected. When it happens, it should be a shock but in terms of the campaign it is an event of creative destruction. The Travellers' time as the crew of a luxurious star liner are over but new adventures and excitement await them. The emergence of Naalir's newly constructed form does not occur without notice. The phased destruction of the *Ventura Fortuna* releases a massive amount of energy. The implosion and disintegration phases of the Reverie extract the hull and all materials contained within the ship, depositing them into jumpspace.

THE DECLARATION

After its transformation and rise from the chrysalis of the *Ventura Fortuna* vault, Naalir has something to say. However, the first thing that needs to happen is a relocation to a safe space. At the conclusion of the Reverie, Naalir and possibly the Travellers are in space, perhaps in the *Ventura* launch and the *Velos tis Alitheia*, or maybe in vacc suits, where they float, awaiting rescue. One way or another, the Travellers should be able to get somewhere safe but explaining the alien hardware that contains Naalir could prove to be difficult. No matter, however. The more people who discover the existence of Naalir, the better and more exciting the transition to Act 2 will be.

One of the key aspects of the second campaign act is that the Travellers are fugitives. The Imperial Quarantine Agency, Imperial Naval Intelligence and any other enemies the Travellers have made become key adversaries for them to deal with in the next phase of the campaign. A public sighting of Naalir and an investigation of the disappearance of the *Ventura Fortuna* are public spectacles that can help transition the Travellers into Act 2.

Once they have a moment of privacy with Naalir, it finally speaks to them using an appropriate means of communication. If they are in a public setting or a high-tech world where their conversation might be eavesdropped upon, Naalir resorts to electronic communication, preferably meson comms, since they cannot be intercepted but if such technology is unavailable, it resorts to radio. If Naalir can communicate with relative assurance that they are not being observed, it does so in much more dramatic fashion, speaking in a loud voice tuned to the frequency of each individual Traveller. Some might imagine a powerful masculine voice, while others an authoritative female one. Naalir speaks to each of them with a persona and tone that suits each Traveller's imagination but the words are the same.

The time for change has come. Are you prepared?

TRANSITION TO RENEGADE MINDS

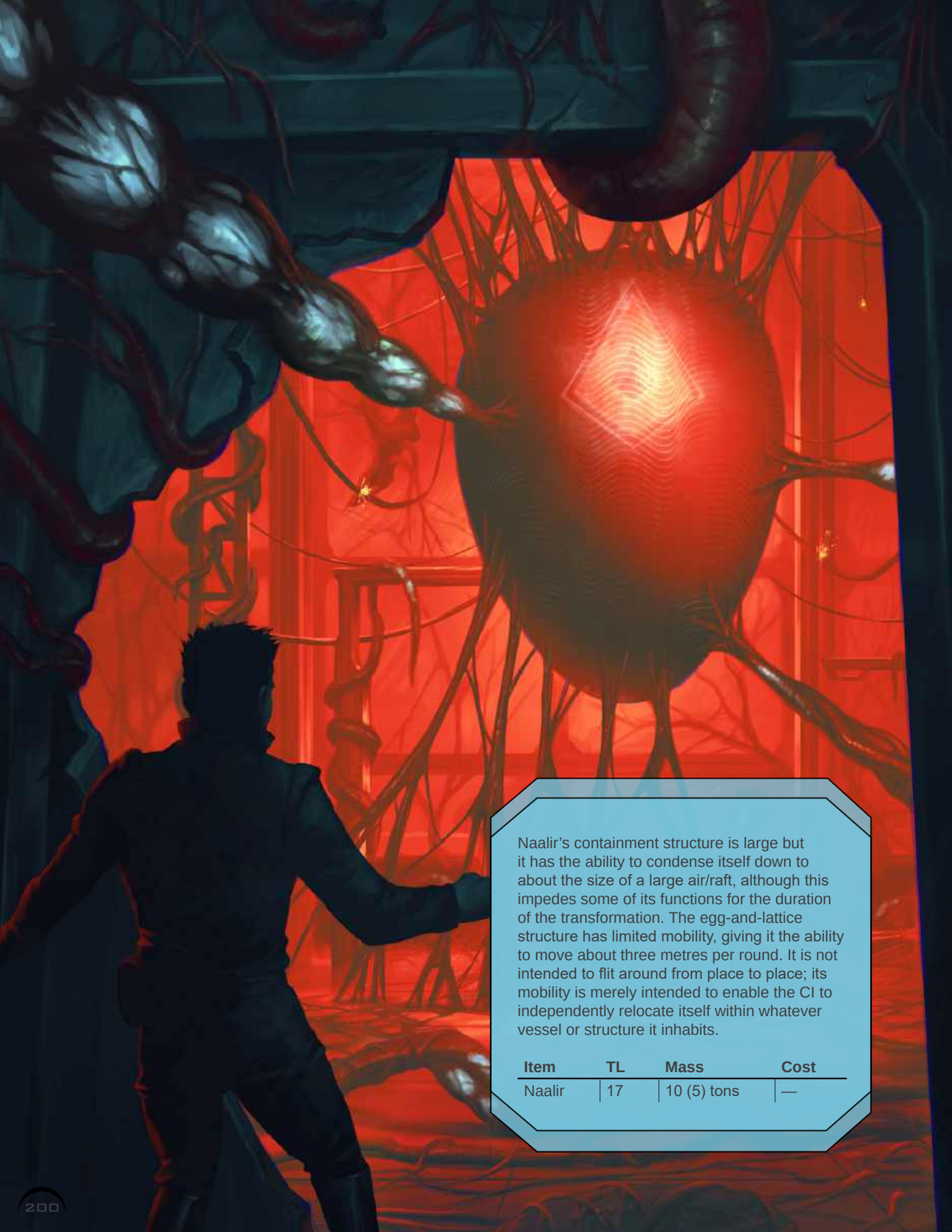
Moving on to the next act of the campaign can take a number of forms, depending on how the Referee would like to see the story unfold. The *Ventura Fortuna* is gone but if the Travellers acted quickly, they might still have the *Velos tis Alitheia*. If they lost the *Velos* as well, then they need to obtain transportation. In Act 2, they must travel to many worlds but there are no guidelines to how this occurs. They can obtain a new starship by whatever means they have at their disposal, using Ship Shares and rewards received from mustering out Benefit rolls, or Naalir can assist them, helping them to falsify records and bank accounts to receive a paid-off ship.

During the events of Act 1, the Travellers might have passed through Ye-lu (see page 23) and encountered its resident conscious intelligence, Mother. If Naalir and Mother had a meeting of the minds, then Mother can become a starship-construction resource for them. Mother is a bit of a rebel and can be convinced by Naalir to help the Travellers. It has unfettered use of the shipyards on the planet, including access to weapons systems. However, Mother will not simply open the doors to anything the Travellers want. It has ideas of its own but will create a useful conveyance which will give the Travellers the ability to flit about the Core with minimal notice by the authorities. The ship that it provides is described in XXXXX, *Peregrine: The Successor*. Two versions of this ship are provided but both feature the same essential design characteristics. One is a standalone ship and the other features a breakaway hull, with room for the *Velos*. Just like the *Velos*, the *Peregrine* is equipped with state-of-the-art stealth, giving the Travellers the ability to minimise their adversaries' opportunities to find them.

For a grittier approach to Act 2, the Referee might forego the advanced super-ship offered by Mother and opt to let the Travellers obtain a standard ship, such as a free trader, far trader, or even a humble scout ship. These ships may be found within the pages of the *Traveller Core Rulebook* or *High Guard*, or *Adventure Class Ships* if something a little more exotic is desired. Operating a typical starship might afford the Travellers the opportunity to 'hide in plain sight' as they embark upon their next series of adventures. The Core is one of the most heavily populated sectors in Charted Space and its starlanes are heavily trafficked. Flying aboard an anonymous ship that looks the same as hundreds of others might provide all the cover the Travellers need.

It is also possible for the Travellers to conduct the next act of the campaign with no starship at all – at least not one of their *own*. One major challenge when taking this narrative route is what to do with Naalir. In its new form, Naalir consumes approximately 10 tons of space. However, there are multiple ways to get around this burden. For one, Naalir's new form is built using highly flexible TL17 materials, unattainable and not reproduceable anywhere in Charted Space, save for Sabmiqys (Antares: 2117, A560056-H), a Red Zoned world in Antares. Naalir can reduce its profile to half its size for extensive periods of time, consuming only five tons, making it much more easily stowable. This reduces its performance to that of a TL16 conscious intelligence for the duration.

Hiring on as crew for various starships, purchasing passages, possibly even stowing away on a ship or two, could enable the Travellers to leave a minimal trail to follow. Nefarious agencies will have taken notice of the Reverie and the Travellers soon discover that they are under hot pursuit, first by investigators and eventually by agents who want to take them down and obtain – or destroy – Naalir. Using alternative methods of transportation makes their trail difficult to follow. Middle passage on a far trader from one star system to the next, then hiring on as crew on a subsidised merchant, followed by stowing away in a cargo module on a megafreighter is one possible series of interstellar transits. Plying the spacelanes in this manner makes the Travellers unpredictable and requires pursuers to start from scratch each time they want to pick up the trail. The desire to own the ship upon which they fly might overwhelm the Travellers' sense of self-preservation but the best form of transit might be owning no ship at all.



Naalir's containment structure is large but it has the ability to condense itself down to about the size of a large air/raft, although this impedes some of its functions for the duration of the transformation. The egg-and-lattice structure has limited mobility, giving it the ability to move about three metres per round. It is not intended to flit around from place to place; its mobility is merely intended to enable the CI to independently relocate itself within whatever vessel or structure it inhabits.

Item	TL	Mass	Cost
Naalir	17	10 (5) tons	—